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Half the battle : the administration and higher organisation of the AIF 1914-1918

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Publication Date:
1997

DOI:
https://doi.org/10.26190/unsworks/18025

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HALF THE BATTLE: THE ADMINISTRATION AND HIGHER ORGANISATION OF THE AIF 1914–1918

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Thesis submitted for
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
University of New South Wales

1997

Abstract

Administration of armies has been sadly neglected in historical studies but the ability of the AIF to develop an efficient system of administration and to fit into the equally efficient British system, had much to do with the success of the AIF, especially late in the war. The various Empire governments had made some preparations for an alliance system of fighting in the event of a major war, but in practice these needed a great deal of adjustment. This thesis examines the manner in which the dominions and Britain planned for a possible war and the way in which changes had to be made in practice. It examines the manner in which the AIF developed a system and the many facets of this system, which had developed a remarkable degree of efficiency by the end of the war. Because the AIF and CEF were so alike in size, composition and in the problems they faced, a recurring theme of the thesis is a comparison between the two.

It embraces the following:

a. Prewar preparation for a combined empire army.
b. The organisation of the administrative system of the AIF and the manner this improved through the war.
c. The organisation and problems of the CEF administrative system
d. The development of a system of capitation to pay for the services supplied to the AIF and CEF.
e. Supply of equipment.
f. Manner in which both forces worked to maintain their forces.
g. The manner in which both forces catered for needs of the individual soldiers.
h. Supply in the field
i. Medical administration in the AIF
j. The administration of discipline in the AIF
k. The demobilisation of the AIF.

Acknowledgments

As with any large research work, this thesis would not have been possible without the advice, support and assistance of a number of people. First among these were my family and my supervisors. The former gave me encouragement and spent many hours proof-reading, hours willingly given and greatly appreciated. I originally started this work under the supervision of Associate Professor Eric Andrews and he was an immense help in many ways but to Professor Peter Dennis and Associate Professor Jeff Grey, my debt is incalculable. Besides giving me guidance in research and areas I needed to investigate, both worked very hard to improve my writing style. Any problems that remain are despite their help not because of it.

Besides these, I gained assistance from many others. The staff of the Australian War Memorial, in particular were always helpful and encouraging and it is a pleasure to acknowledge the debt I owe them. Associate Professor John McCarthy gave some valuable insights into research methods and was always encouraging. Dr Kent Fedorowich and Gudrun, his wife, helped me greatly at various times. no more so than while I was researching in England. At that time I was able also to gain some useful insights from John Terraine. In Canada, Dr Ron Haycock gave me hospitality and some very practical assistance in aspects of my study of that country. At Canberra Grammar School, Walter Hine was very helpful in translating material for me and Tini Spooner spent a great deal of time helping me with word-processing.

Finally, some others gave me encouragement when things appeared not to be going well and gave me the will to continue. Most important in this were my parents and my brother, Graham, Jeff Grey and his wife Gina and my headmaster at Canberra Grammar School, Tim Murray.

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Diagrams

Quotations from Crown Copywrite are reproduced by permission of the Controller H.M. Stationery Office.

Glossary

AA	Anti Aircraft
AA	Australian Archives
AA&QMG	Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General
AAG	Assistant Adjutant General
AAH	Australian Auxilliary Hospital
ACCS	Australian Casualty Clearing Station
ACG	Assistant Chaplain General
ADAPS	Assistant Director Army Postal Services
ADC	Aide-de-Camp
ADFAL	Bridges Memorial Library Australian Defence Force Academy
ADMS	Assistant Director of Medical Services
ADOS	Assistant Director of Ordnance Services
ADS&T	Assistant Director of Supplies and Transport
ADVS	Assistant Director of Veterinary Services
AFA	Australian Field Artillery
AFC	Australian Flying Corps
AG	Adjutant General
AGH	Australian General Hospital
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
ALH	Australian Light Horse
AMD	Anzac Mounted Division
AMF	Australian Military Forces
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps Also Anzac
APM	Assistant Provost Marshall
AQMG	Assistant Quartermaster General
ARP	Ammunition Refilling Point
ASC	Army Service Corps
ASH	Australian Stationary Hospital
AWM	Australian War Memorial
BAC	Brigade Ammunition Column
Bde	Brigade
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
BGGS	Brigadier General, General Staff
BGRA	Brigadier General Royal Artillery
BGRE	Brigadier General Royal Engineers
BL	Breech Loading
Bn	Battalion
Bty	Battery
CB	Companion of the Order of the Bath
CB	Confined to Barracks
CBE	Commander of the Order of the British Empire
CCS	Casualty Clearing Station
CE	Chief Engineer
CEF	Canadian Expeditionary Force
CGS	Chief of General Staff (in the Field)

CID	Committee of Imperial Defence
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff (in the War Office)
CMG	Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George
CO	Commanding Officer
COO	Chief Ordnance Officer
Coy	Company
CRA	Commander Royal Artillery
CRE	Commander Royal Engineers
CSO	Chief Signal Officer
DAA&QMG	Deputy Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General
DAAG	Deputy Assistant Adjutant General
DAC	Divisional Ammunition Column
DADOS	Deputy Assistant Director of Ordnance Services
DADR	Deputy Assistant Director of Remounts
DADVS	Deputy Assistant Director of Veterinary Services
DAG	Deputy Adjutant General
DAPM	Deputy Assistant Provost Marshall
DAQMG	Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General
DCM	Distinguished Conduct Medal
DCM	District Court Martial
DDMS	Deputy Director of Medical Services
DDOS	Deputy Director of Ordnance Services
DDVS	Deputy Director of Veterinary Services
DGMS	Director General of Medical Services
Div	Division
DMS	Director of Medical Services
DOD	Died of Disease
DORE	Division Officer Royal Engineers
DOW	Died of Wounds
DQMG	Deputy Quartermaster General
DSC	Divisional Supply Column
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
EEF	Egyptian Expeditionary Force
FGCM	Field General Court Martial
FSR	Field Service Regulations
GCB	Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath
GCBE	Grand Commander of the British Empire
GCM	General Court Martial
GCMG	Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St Michael and St George
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GOC AIF	General Officer Commanding the Australian Imperial Force
GSO	General Staff Officer
HE	High Explosive

HQ	Headquarters
ICC	Imperial Camel Corps
IHL	Imprisonment with Hard Labour
Inf	Infantry
IOO	Inspecting Ordnance Officer
JAG	Judge Advocate General
KBE	Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire
KCB	Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath
KIA	Killed in Action
L of C	Line of Communications
LGS	Limbered General Service (wagon)
LTM	Light Trench Mortar
MAC	Motor Ambulance Convoy
MBE	Member of the British Empire
MC	Military Cross
MDS	Main Dressing Station
MEF	Mediterranean Expeditionary Force
MG	Machine Gun
MIA	Missing in Action
MID	Mentioned in Despatches
MLO	Military Landing Officer
MM	Military Medal
MMP	Mounted Military Police
MP	Military Police
MT	Motor Transport
MVS	Mobile Veterinary Section
NLA	National Library of Australia
NME	Non-Military Education
NZ & A Div	New Zealand and Australian Division
OBE	Officer of the Order of the British Empire
OMFC	Overseas Military Forces of Canada
PM	Provost Martial
POW	Prisoner of War
PRO	Public Record Office London
psc	Passed Staff College
QF	Quick Firing
QMG	Quartermaster General
RAA	Royal Australian Artillery
RAE	Royal Australian Engineers

RAF	Royal Air Force
RAFA	Royal Australian Field Artillery
RAGA	Royal Australian Garrison Artillery
RAMC	Royal Army Medical Corps
RAP	Regimental Aid Post
RASC	Royal Army Service Corps
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
RGA	Royal Garrison Artillery
RHA	Royal Horse Artillery
RMC	Royal Military College (Duntroon in Australia, Kingston in Canada)
ROO	Railhead Ordnance Officer
RSM	Regimental Sergeant Major
RSO	Railhead Supply Officer
RTO	Railway Transport Officer
SAA	Small Arms Ammunition
SIW	Self Inflicted Wound
SRP	Supply Refilling Point
TM	Trench Mortar
VC	Victoria Cross
VD	Venereal Disease
VD	Volunteer Decoration
VES	Veterinary Evacuation Station

Introduction

In military terms, administration covers the management and execution of all matters not covered in tactics and strategy, it is 'that portion of the functions of command which deals with the maintenance of the forces in the field', this includes the internal management of units and formations. Administration is a function of command at all levels, but administrative detail is the business of the appropriate staff, at whatever level.[1]

The administration of a military formation (ie an army, corps, division or brigade) and the administration of a unit (battalions, cavalry regiments or Field squadrons) are vastly different propositions in terms of scale and complexity, but the principles of military administration are essentially the same at whatever level they are exercised. The problems which can hamper the sound administration of military organisations do not differ much in type. The aim of administration in a military environment is to obtain the best return from the resources available to a commander in support of his tactical and operational objectives. The principles which underline effective administration are foresight, flexibility, economy, simplicity and cooperation. The factors which will interfere with sound administration are environmental and organisational. In the former category we might include terrain, climate, disease, the local population and, of course, enemy action. In the latter category, we might include political interference (not only civilian), inter-service and inter-allied rivalry, and the impact of prewar policy, especially financial (although the importance of this will tend to diminish in the course of a prolonged war).

Although the administration of armies has become more complex in the course of the twentieth century in keeping with the greatly increased complexity of war itself, the success of armies in the field throughout history has usually come down to the mundane but vital matters of logistics and administration. As Van Creveld has noted,

> on the pages of military history books, armies frequently seem capable of moving in any direction at almost any speed and to almost any distance once their commanders have made up their

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[1] Major General J.M. Durrant, 'Army Administration for War', a lecture presented in November 1933, Private Papers of J.M. Durrant, PR88/009, folder 6, AWM.

> minds to do so. In reality, they cannot, and the failure to take cognisance of the fact has probably led to more campaigns being ruined than ever were by enemy action.[1]

Important as they are, administration and its related functions rarely receive the analysis they deserve, either from historians or from military writers. In a famous passage, Wavell noted how

> in most military books strategy and tactics are emphasised at the expense of the administrative factors . . . there are ten military students who can tell you how Blenheim was won for one who has any knowledge of all the administrative preparations which made the march to Blenheim possible.[2]

This thesis will address the administration of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in the First World War: in doing so, it will fill a gap in the literature, because this, like all military administration, has been greatly neglected. Because the Australian experience was paralleled by that of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), a body of similar size and experience to the AIF, the performance of the AIF will be compared selectively to that of the CEF. If by 1918 both had become among the foremost fighting formations on the Western Front, as has frequently been averred, the development of their administrative functions undoubtedly played a significant part in that outcome. Although admittedly the evolution of their respective doctrines and their implementation at the tactical and operational levels were also crucial. The manner in which both bodies coped with similar problems is also worthy of comparison.

The administration of armies has generally attracted little study in history. As Wavell implies, there has been a tendency to study the actual battles that punctuate wars rather than the efforts made by the military leaders prior to or subsequent to the battles. Yet it is often the care and attention paid to administrative details that ensure victory will be gained and/or exploited to its maximum benefit.

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1 Martin Van Creveld, *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 2.

2 Field Marshal Lord Wavell, *Soldiers and Soldiering or Epithets of War* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1953), 22. The text was delivered originally as part of the Lees Knowles Lectures in 1936.

Where matters of military administration have been examined, the treatment is largely confined to logistics, but even here the body of literature devoted to the topic has been small. The situation has improved only marginally from 1917 when, according to one commentator, even military officers knew 'next to nothing' about logistics (and his definition of 'logistics' is essentially that which we have postulated for administration). Their ignorance was due to an almost complete absence of any literature on the subject.[1]

This absence is inexcusable because military administration had been developing in complexity for many years. As armies grew larger and more sophisticated, greater attention had to be paid to their administration and more officers had to be allocated to this task, since 'only in the smallest bodies of troops could a commander look after every detail of his men's existence'. Because of this, Hittle argues that, 'It should be realized that the absence or presence of logistical agencies is the deciding factor in determining the organizational advancement of any military force.' He shows that from the time of the ancient Egyptians there was a growth in the number and importance of administrative duties, and that these were performed to a greater extent by specialists whose tasks increased in complexity as the armies themselves became more complex. This process reached an important milestone when Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden revolutionised the administration of armies in the early seventeenth century through his development of a professional, trained staff even though it 'had few responsibilities beyond the routine of organization and supply'.[2]

The Prussian Army in the nineteenth century was the first to realise that the increasing size and complexity of modern armies required a full-time professional administration, and after the disasterous defeat of 1806 at the hands of Napoleon General Gerhard von Scharnhorst established the Prussian General Staff. The success of this body in the Wars of Unification (1864, 1866 and 1870) convinced other states to organise similar staffs. As a result, by 1914 all modern armies had a group of trained administrators who

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1 George C. Thorpe, *Pure Logistics* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1986), 1-2.

2 Capt M.V. Bezeau, 'The Role and Organization of Canadian Military Staffs 1904-1945'. (MA in War Studies Thesis, Department of History, Royal Military College of Canada, 1978), 5; J.D. Hittle, *The Military Staff: Its History and Development* (Harrisburg: The Stackpole Company, 1961), 15.

performed set functions at higher levels. Selected on merit, these administrators carried out 'G' functions (mainly trying to perfect schemes of defence, offence and training including testing and re-evaluating these thoroughly in conditions made as realistic as possible) and 'A' and 'Q' functions, ie general administration and supply, those which are the subject of this thesis.

This aspect of administration has been described as 'the servant of tactics and strategy, but such an important servant that it cannot afford to be ignored'. Included in it are such matters as the movement of men and their supplies of food, ordnance and ammunition to the front line, especially prior to a battle, and the maintenance of these supplies during the battle. Plans have to be made to care for the sick and wounded, to clear away and bury the dead, and to move prisoners from the battlefield and subsequently to transfer them to prisoner of war camps. During the First World War the importance of these aspects of administration became obvious due to the unprecedented size of the various armies involved in the war and the huge quantities of supplies and munitions that they consumed.[1]

Because these matters are fundamental to the planning and results of battles, they have been treated to some degree in most histories of the First World War. In particular, it is emphasised occasionally that in its administration the British Army was very successful. As Lindsell observes, 'It is certainly true that in the later stages of the Great War the British Army was better equipped and supplied than the army of any other belligerent nation, not only as regards its fighting necessities, but also with those items required for the maintenance of a high standard of health and general well-being among the troops'. This aspect cannot be emphasised enough for the superior administrative organisation of the Allied armies in the last few months was a significant factor in the Allied victory. It will be a significant strand of the overall argument in this thesis that the administration of the armies in the war was an area of virtually unqualified success, something which can be said of few other aspects of the conduct of the war, and as such deserves far greater attention.[2]

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1 Colonel W.G. Lindsell, *A.& Q. or Military Administration in War* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden Ltd., 1933), 3.

2 Major (temp Lieutenant Colonel) W.G. Lindsell, 'Administrative Lessons of the Great War', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, LXXI (Feb - Nov. 1926), 713.

The whole question of the administration of the armies, including such matters as the supply of food, munitions and equipment, is given scant treatment in histories of the First World War. In Enser's standard bibliography, in a total of nearly 6,000 books there are none listed under the topics 'administration', 'supply' or 'logistics'; there is one on food and three on transport on the Western Front and, although there are twenty on training, these were all practical guides written in 1915 or 1916. By way of contrast, there were 47 books on the occult! The official histories do give these topics a passing mention but that is all, and this aspect of the British Army's performance is given even less prominence in the histories of the dominion forces. This is because it was a subject which held little interest for the Official Historians and because of the subsidiary role played by the dominion armies in the war.[1]

The dominions had planned before the war to mobilise expeditionary forces if a major war erupted. They had no desire for these forces to be autonomous but simply assumed that if their territory was under no direct threat, they would integrate their forces into the British Army. When war broke out in 1914, they put this planning into effect. The major dominions each supplied an expeditionary force, transported it to the battle front and then considered it simply to be another part of the British Army for all strategic concerns and most administrative purposes, especially their ability to satisfy their troops' requirements by indenting for them from the overall British Expeditionary Force ordnance system. This was an efficient system but the official historians of both Australia and Canada did not even mention it, probably because it was not unique to the experience of their countries' armies and in the case of C.E.W. Bean, the Australian official historian, because it was outside his central theme of Anzac superiority.

In examining the administration of the AIF in the First World War, it is of great benefit to compare the Australian administration with that of the Canadians. There were distinct similarities in the two forces and yet there are contrasts between the ways in which they adapted themselves to their changing relationships with the British Government and Army. It is especially instructive to examine the manner in which the civilian and military leadership in each dominion viewed its relationship with Britain

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1 Enser, AGS, *A Subject Bibliography of the First World War (second edition): Books in English 1914-1987*, (Aldershot, Hants: Gower, 1990).

and its role in a war which was causing such changes in the fabric of their world. As Wise has pointed out,

> it is something of a puzzle that such an investigation, in any thorough way, has not yet taken place. We are like spokes on the imperial wheel; . . . we have many similarities, but many differences as well, and I am confident that a comparison of our two experiences would bring most fruitful results.

Wise was referring to the entire scope of the military history of Australia and Canada, but his words are equally apt when applied to the First World War.[1]

Despite the importance of this topic, the written history of the AIF in the First World War follows the general trend of most military history in that the matters of administration are largely ignored. In editing and writing the monumental work, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, C.E.W. Bean produced a extremely detailed work. However, Bean's history has a number of glaring weaknesses, and one of the most important of these is his neglect of the administration of the AIF during the war years.[2]

Bean's neglect of this topic is surprising in some ways since, for most of the war, the administration of the AIF was under the control and supervision of two men Bean liked and admired greatly. For the whole of the war, the officer with overall responsibility for the administration of the AIF was Sir William Birdwood, a British Indian Army officer who, in 1914, was appointed General Officer Commanding the AIF (GOC AIF) by Lord Kitchener, then the Secretary of State for War. In most of his administration of the AIF, Birdwood was assisted by the very popular and capable administrator, General Sir Brudenell White, an Australian staff officer whom C.D. Coulthard-Clark describes as 'Bean's hero'.[3]

This omission is all the more surprising in that, far from the administration reflecting poorly on the AIF, it mirrored or even exceeded the performance of the AIF itself. The AIF began the war as a very raw body of men whose leadership and discipline led to some problems. However, by

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1 S. F. Wise, 'Canadian Military History. A Comparative Report', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, 7 (October, 1985), 10.

2 *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1921).

3 C.D. Coulthard-Clark, *No Australian Need Apply. The Troubled Career of Lieutenant-General Gordon Legge* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1988), x.

1918, the performance of the AIF was at the highest level, albeit that some serious disciplinary problems continued when the force was not in the line. The administration of the force showed a similar pattern to this in that it began as an inexperienced body riddled with problems yet quickly (probably more quickly than the AIF as a whole), developed into a very efficient practitioner of its craft.

Andrews has argued that Bean refused to examine very closely those areas which reflected badly on the performance of the AIF or those of its leaders whom he admired, such as White. After the initial period, however, there is little in the administration of the force that detracts from the reputation of the AIF or its leaders. As will be shown, the AIF was integrated into the British supply and ordnance system with a minimum of problems and generally it did this better than its sister dominion, Canada. In other ways the Australian troops were usually well looked after both in and out of combat, although there were some problems with discipline in the force. Despite these latter problems, the AIF was the only force to be repatriated after the war without any major riots. All of these are clear indications that general administration was carried on efficiently.[1]

Despite Bean's admiration for two of its major leaders and the success of the Australian administration, he devoted only two full chapters to administration in the ten volumes of the *Official History*. The details of preparations for battle and the general supervision and organisation of the AIF do not appear to have appealed to Bean. Instead, his volumes are devoted mainly to the exploits of the individual soldiers and officers who comprised the AIF he idolised.

Although they devote comparatively more space to the treatment of the administration of their force, the Canadian histories of the war fail also to give detailed treatment to this important topic. There are two Canadian official histories; one by Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson, which covers the whole period of the war from its outbreak in 1914 until the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) was demobilised in 1919, and another by Colonel A. Fortesque Duguid which only covers the period from the outbreak of the war until September 1915. In their respective volumes, Nicholson devotes

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1 E.M. Andrews, 'Bean and Bullecourt: Weaknesses and Strengths of the Official History of Australia in the First World War', *Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire*, No 72, (1990) 45, 46.

two chapters out of seventeen to administration whereas Duguid, obviously seeing the topic as being important, devotes five chapters out of twenty to it. His failure, however, to complete any more than one volume of his history greatly reduces the benefit of his increased treatment.[1]

In their volumes then, both the Australian and Canadian Official Historians preferred to concentrate almost exclusively on events of the battles and campaigns in which their respective forces were involved, and in so doing, to record the commendable performances of their countrymen. The prosaic details of administration do not appear to have appealed to them, perhaps because they believed that they would not appeal to the potential audience of their histories. Whatever the reason for this failure, these men made a grave error. The whole question of the administration of the forces of the two largest dominions is important, not only because it constituted an essential ingredient of the great successes of these forces, but also because in the administration of their forces, these dominions both reflected and caused changes in their relationship with Britain.

The scope of the present study will try to explain the process by which the AIF increased its efficiency in administration. It will explain the methods used by the Australians to administer their force while fitting into a British system of supply and yet increasingly trying to gain a greater degree of independence from the general system of British Army administration. In doing so, the thesis will deal almost exclusively with the main body of the AIF as it moved from Australia to Egypt, to Gallipoli, back to Egypt and then on to France. It is forced into this pattern because few records of the administration of the Australian forces in the Middle East from 1916 to 1918 exist as most were destroyed in the 1940s. Finally, it will compare the Australian system of administration with that of the Canadians and try to analyse their relative successes and failures. In doing so it will be covering a much neglected area of military history.

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1 Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1919. The Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1962); Colonel A. Fortesque Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-1919. General Series Volume 1 From the Outbreak of the War to the Formation of the Canadian Corps August 1914 -September 1915* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938).

Chapter 1

Preparation For War and Formation of the AIF

As the July Crisis of 1914 deepened and it became increasingly likely that Britain would become involved in a war with Germany, Australia responded enthusiastically. Although contesting a Federal election at the time, both main political parties were in agreement that Australia should send forces to aid Britain in the looming struggle. The attitude of the politicians is best exemplified by the famous promise of Andrew Fisher (leader of the opposition Federal Labor Party) that Australia 'will help and defend her [Britain] to our last man and our last shilling'. This was matched by a similar affirmation of support from the Government and it appears that these statements reflected the feeling of the majority of Australians. As Scott stated, 'A survey of organs of opinion and of the political speeches delivered during the campaign makes it clear that Australia at the beginning of August 1914, was substantially unanimous in her determination to share the perils and the burdens of war with the rest of the Empire.' As a result, on 3 August, the Cook Government (soon to be voted out of office) sent a cable to the British Government offering to send a military force 20,000 strong

> of any desired composition to any destination desired by the Home Government, the force to be at the complete disposal of the Home Government. The cost of dispatch and maintenance will be borne by this [ie, the Australian] government.[1]

The day following this offer, the British Government declared war on Germany and accepted from the dominions the aid which had been planned for in the past and which now was offered willingly. On 7 August, the British Government replied to the Australian offer but suggested that it would prefer a force of only 'two infantry brigades, one light horse brigade and one field artillery brigade'. Clearly afraid that a force of this composition would be split up and incorporated into established British formations as had happened to Australian units in the Boer War, the Inspector-General of

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[1] Fisher spoke his words in an election speech at Horsham, Victoria, 31 July 1914, [Melbourne] *Age* , 1 August 1914; Ernest Scott, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume XI* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1936), 23; C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume I* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1921), 28-29.

the Australian Military Forces, Brigadier General William Throsby Bridges (later commander of the AIF until his death in May 1915), prevailed upon the Australian Government to insist that it send a full division because this would ensure that the Australian contingent could serve as a complete formation and not be split up.[1]

Australia's offer of a division matched that of the Canadian Government whose offer was accepted on 6 August. The next day the Canadians were informed by the Army Council that 'one division would be [a] suitable composition of [an] expeditionary force.' These offers from the dominions were not unexpected by the British; Imperial conferences in 1907, 1909 and 1911 had indicated that, in all probability, the dominions would support Britain loyally in the event of a war and with forces that could be integrated easily into the British Army. The offers were all the more likely to be made because this idea had been promoted since these conferences by a number of prominent 'imperialists' in the dominions among them Bridges.[2]

The move to develop a system which would facilitate this integration had begun after the Boer War. In a wave of imperial enthusiasm, both Australians and Canadians had sent small contingents to South Africa to aid Britain in its war against the Boers. The initial British commander, Sir Redvers Buller, had been reluctant to accept anything other than small units of infantry which he could attach to British regiments. In practice this did not occur as both the Australians and the Canadians had expressed the wish to fight in national units, with the small Canadian contingent being sent as an established battalion which that Government insisted should be maintained on this basis. After federation, the new Australian Government was not willing to send an official contingent, partly because of the disorganisation in defence matters it had inherited from the colonies, so its contribution was small and reluctantly given (as opposed to that given by the states which sent a total of 16,000 men, often quite enthusiastically).[3]

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1 *Official History Vol. I* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1921), 30.

2 Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1919* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1962), 17.

3 Richard A. Preston, *Canada and "Imperial Defense": A Study of the Origins of the British Commonwealth's Defense Organisation, 1867-1919* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), 261-4.

Despite the ambivalent attitude of their governments to the war, the colonial troops were praised by the British for their high performances in combat although reservations were expressed about the discipline of the troops and it was believed that they performed best under British officers. Both of these observations are a clear indication of the shortage of experienced officers in the dominions.[1]

It was not only dominion officers who had performed badly in South Africa, for the initial performance of the British High Command had been lamentable. As a result, in 1903 Lord Esher headed the 'Commission of Enquiry into the War' which resulted in reforms to the British Army. Amongst other things, the Commission pointed out that there was a large untapped source of manpower in the Empire which

> could become a valuable addition to British strength in time of need. It had been demonstrated that despite lack of experience, colonials quickly became first-class fighting men. Long tutelage under British officers had familiarized them with British military organisation and methods and with British military law so that they could be relatively easily integrated into a British force.

What was needed was officer training, especially staff training, and a standardisation of equipment. Both of these needs were to be stressed in a number of conferences prior to the First World War, at which the British and various imperial loyalists in the dominions strove to achieve their ambition to get dominion leaders to agree to the formation of an 'imperial' army.[2]

The signing of the Entente with France in 1904 was an indication that the British had begun to realise that they could become involved in a war on the Continent against Germany. If this occurred, it was probable that they would require every possible man and so it would become very important that they could call upon trained colonial forces which had a similar establishment to the British and whose equipment was interchangeable with that of the British formations. This was not a new idea. The Carnarvon Commission of July 1879 had first raised the question of the need for a standardisation of equipment, weapons and ammunition throughout the Empire, but the possibility of a major continental war made

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1 Ibid., 267.
2 Ibid., 281.

the issue more urgent. At a special Imperial Conference held in July 1909, this need was stressed, and as a result, the British Prime Minister made a statement in the House of Commons on 26 August which indicated, amongst other things, that

> there was a recommendation that without impairing the complete control of the government of each Dominion over the Military Forces raised within it, these forces should be standardised, the formation of the units, the arrangements for transport, the patterns for weapons etc, being as far as possible assimilated to those which have recently been worked out for the British Army.[1]

This was further stressed at the Imperial Conference of 1911. In papers prepared prior to the conference, Colonel C. M. Dobell (a GSO (2) at the War Office) noted that 'the necessity for similarity in organisation and training has been urged several times previously and, albeit slowly, we are gradually securing uniformity'. He emphasised that the British needed an assurance that this process would continue so that any assistance from the dominions would conform in organisation and training to that of the regular British Army.[2]

While the feeling at this conference was generally in favour of a commitment to supply contingents to aid Britain in a general war, the British position was not accepted in its entirety, and the dominions continued to express a degree of independence. Australia had given some indication of this in 1906 when it rejected almost completely the idea of British officers filling the 'higher and more important positions of command and administration in the Australian forces.'[3]

In 1911 there was further evidence that the dominions would not slavishly follow the British line, both at a meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence held on 30 May, and at a Committee of the Imperial Conference which met on 14 June to discuss questions of defence. At these meetings a pattern was established which was followed during the coming

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1 Ibid., 269; Quoted by Sir Frederick Borden, 17 June 1911, Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference, WO 106/43, PRO.

2 Colonel C.M. Dobell, Untitled briefing memorandum prepared for the Imperial Conference of 1911, 26 August 1910, WO 106/43, PRO.

3 Military Forces of the Commonwealth, Major General H. Finn, Inspector General, Report (1 September 1906), Australian Commonwealth Parliament, *Records of Proceedings and the Printed Papers*, II (1906), 277.

war in that the dominions expressed their willingness to commit themselves to the defence of the Empire, but demanded recognition of some right to control their own destiny.

At the May meeting, the Canadian Prime Minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, emphasised that Canada was not bound by a British declaration of war, although there would be circumstances in which Canada 'would be eager to take part in any war'. Later in the same meeting, Senator Sir George Pearce, who was Australian Minister of Defence at this time (and for the whole of the First World War), pointed out that Australia's force was 'raised entirely for local defence' but that he did recognise that 'in any considerable war a large number of our troops would volunteer for service oversea [sic]'. He then asked for an indication of how and where the British Army would expect these Australians to operate in the event of a war since this would affect Australia's plans for mobilisation and defence schemes but reiterated the sentiment that this 'would not commit us to action.'[1]

Although the dominions at this time were trying to get some indication of what would be expected of them in a war, in common with most British politicians they did not know that talks had been conducted between the French and Major General Henry Wilson, the British Director of Military Operations. These talks involved some degree of commitment from Britain to aid France in a war on the Continent. In fact, when these talks commenced in 1906, only five British politicians were told of them and the information was not passed on to the Cabinet until 1912.[2]

So, in secrecy, Wilson made plans that would later help lead the dominion forces into a war on the Continent. In the event of such a war, Wilson was convinced that although the dominions might want an indication of a specific sphere of operation, 'their troops should be placed under the orders of the CIGS (and War Office) and made available for service in any part of the world.' Clearly he saw no difficulty in getting the dominions to declare war, writing later that 'there was not the slightest

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1 Minutes of the 113th Meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence, 30 May 1911, CAB 38/1842, PRO; Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference Convened to Discuss Questions of Military Defence at the War Office, 14 June 1911, WO 106/43, PRO.

2 Lord Hankey, *The Supreme Command 1914-1918* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1961), 62. The British had talked in hypothetical terms and their commitment would depend on the government of the day, but the French regarded this as a commitment of honour.

doubt that New Zealand forces would be involved in the event of a war between Britain and Germany' and that they would be best used with 'our expeditionary force in the main theatre of operations' where 'a place could be found for them in our own organisations'. In this personal letter to Major General Sir Alexander Godley, the British officer commanding the New Zealand Army, he expressed an opinion about the New Zealanders which he undoubtedly felt held true for the Australians and the Canadians as well.[1]

The Australians, however, had not come easily to the idea of furnishing an expeditionary force for the use of the British, an idea behind which Major General Edward Hutton, GOC of the Australian Military Forces 1901-1904, had been a prime mover. He first advocated the idea of using dominion forces as a supplement to the British Army and as a part of a large imperial army before the Boer War. Hutton saw the supply of dominion troops for this war as the first step towards the achievement of his aim. Having already served in Canada and also with the New South Wales colonial force he had wide experience of the abilities of the colonial forces, and hoped that his posting to Australia would enable him to promote his ideas still further.[2]

Although he had some support, Hutton soon experienced opposition in Australia. In July 1903, he was able to persuade the Minister for Defence, Sir John Forrest, to include provision for an expeditionary force in his Defence Bill of that year which would institute a national scheme of defence organisation for the first time. Forrest later changed his opinion on this matter and the final bill did not include a provision to allow the citizen force, which comprised the greater bulk of the AMF, to be sent overseas in the event of a war. He did provide for a small force of permanent soldiers to be despatched on overseas service but this section of the bill was defeated on the floor of Parliament. The final version of the bill was a defeat for the imperialists because it specifically limited the Militia to home defence and stated that any expeditionary force sent overseas by Australia had to be raised solely on a voluntary basis.

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1 Statement by Sir Henry Wilson at the Imperial Conference, 10 April 1911, WO 106/43, PRO; Sir Henry Wilson to Major General Sir Alexander Godley, 1 January 1912, WO 106/59, PRO.

2 John Mordike, *An Army for a Nation: A History of Australian Military Developments 1880-1914* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), 85-91.

A further significant feature of the bill was that it stipulated that Australians on active service were to be subject to the Imperial *Army Act*, but only in so far as it was not inconsistent with Australian law. As will be seen, during the war this was to cause some dissension between generals (both Australian and British) and Australian politicians, dissension which impinged on the administration of the AIF. At this time then, Hutton had failed in his attempts to form a *de facto* imperial army but he would not give up and in the future his ideas would be furthered by the formation of the Imperial General Staff.[1]

When the British established their General Staff, they created a pattern of administration of the army which governed both its internal management and which also endeavoured to set an established form in its relationships with the Government. As both the Australian and the Canadian armed forces had been trained and led by British officers in the late nineteenth century, their forces were organised on this British pattern, which was reinforced by a system of officer exchange within the Empire, instigated at Australia's suggestion in 1905.[2]

British Military Organisation and Administration

The British Army was slow to organise a modern General Staff, which was established only after the recommendations of the Esher Committee in 1903. There was some conflict over the manner in which officers should be selected for the General Staff but it was eventually decided that it would be a body of superior quality officers who would have their promotion prospects enhanced because of their membership of this body. Although the General Staff officers were concerned with the operational side of military activities and were separated from the administrative branches of the army, they did look at improving administration in the army as well. As a result, in 1909 the General Staff brought out the *Field Service Regulations Part II, Organization and Administration,* which standardised administrative practice in the British Army and throughout the Empire by laying down 'general principles — not rules'. These were to guide subordinate officers in assisting their C-in-C and the principles were

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1 Ibid., 126-128.
2 Preston, *Imperial Defense*, 353.

intended to be implemented more easily because the dominions and Britain had a common organisation.[1]

At the 1907 Imperial Conference the British had strongly advocated the idea of a homogeneous war organisation for the armies of the Empire. In practice they wanted 'common patterns in rifles, machine guns and ammunition'. This gained grudging acceptance from the assembled dominion leaders as did a suggestion that there was a need for an Imperial General Staff. The great objection to this proposal was that the dominions were wholly unwilling to sanction overtly 'a centralized military control for the Empire in any form'.[2]

Canada had established its General Staff in 1904 but Australia did not form one until 1909, at which time the Government appointed Bridges as its first chief. As the dominions had now established local staffs, it was a logical step to accept the idea that the IGS would be mainly British in composition with a representative from each of the dominions being attached to it. This body would ensure that any combined force of British and dominion troops would be equipped, trained and administered in the same manner so that wartime complexities could be reduced to a minimum. That this latter principle had been achieved in Australia was announced by Senator Pearce in Melbourne on 23 June 1913 when he relinquished his office as Defence Minister. As he expressed it, 'The War Establishments of the British Army have been accepted as the basis on which the War Organisation of the Commonwealth Military Forces have been modelled.' As Stanley put it, 'standardization was a far more effective means of bringing about the creation of an Imperial force than all the arguments marshalled by the Imperial Federationists', or men like Hutton. The army that Australia was to raise between 1914 and 1918, then, was one whose methods, equipment, establishments, and administration were all designed to enable it to fit easily into the much larger BEF.[3]

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1 John Gooch, 'The Creation of the British General Staff 1904-1914', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies*, Vol CXVI (June 1971), 51-2; War Office, *Field Service Regulations Part II, Organization and Administration* (London: HMSO, 1909), 24.

2 John Gooch, *The Plans of War: The General Staff and British Military Strategy c. 1900-1916* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 134-6.

3 Preston, *Imperial Defense*, 402; Senator G Pearce, memorandum, 23 June 1913, 7, CAB 11/25, PRO; George F.G. Stanley, *Canada's Soldiers: The Military History of an Unmilitary People* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1974), 304.

In raising the AIF after the war began, the Australian Government made a significant decision that the organisation of the force was to be based upon brigades recruited on a state basis. For example, the 1st Infantry Brigade came from NSW, the 2nd from Victoria and the 3rd was composed of battalions raised in the smaller states. Throughout the war, this brigade organisation was maintained strongly in such matters as the returning of recovered wounded, appointing officers who had been promoted from the ranks and posting reinforcements. There is a military tradition which holds that soldiers feel a 'special kind of bond and loyalty to their unit' when such a unit is selected on a regional basis, 'making for linguistic, religious, normative and many other kinds of affinities between the men.' Although there was not the same degree of regional, religious and linguistic differences in Australia as there were in Canada, say, or Britain itself, there were enough local affinities in pre-1914 Australia to suggest that this brigade organisation was an important factor in the Australian performance in the war.[1]

As in the British system, the three brigades plus their supporting units (ie, artillery, engineers, etc) were organised into a division. Divisions, in turn, were organised into corps. This is a term which describes a loose grouping of several divisions of infantry or cavalry under the command of a major general or lieutenant general who has a large staff to aid him in his work. For much of the war, the AIF fought as separate divisions that were organised into two corps in France (I Anzac Corps and II Anzac Corps, which also included the New Zealand Division) and the Desert Mounted Corps which fought in the Middle East. In France, the two corps were often separated and it was not until November 1917, and after much agitation, that the five Australian divisions then in France were finally organised into the one corps, the 'Australian Corps'.

Part of the agitation for the formation of the Australian Corps arose because there was no guarantee that the two Australasian corps would serve with each other. Instead any corps could be ordered, as was expedient for GHQ, to join with several other corps to form one of the five armies which made up the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in France for most of the war. As the Commander in Chief could vary the size and composition of his

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1 Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis and War in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 30.

corps and armies according to his needs, a discussion of the administration of the division will best illustrate the broad process of administration in the AIF during the war.[1]

A division was 'a self contained formation comprising all arms and services in due proportion, complete in itself with every requisite for independent action'. In 1914 it was a formation of about 20,000 men, but this number could vary, and Australian divisions were much smaller than this by 1918. It was commanded by a major general (usually referred to as the GOC, general officer commanding) and consisted of three brigades each of which was commanded by a brigadier general (as he was called in 1914-18). The staff of a division, like that of an army or a corps, was divided up into General branch, or 'G' branch, which was responsible for those areas directly concerned with combat (ie, Operations, Intelligence and Training) and the administrative staff. This latter was divided into the Adjutant-General Branch ('A' branch), which was responsible for the personnel of the force including its discipline, the Quartermaster-General's branch ('Q' branch) which was responsible for supplying the formation with its material needs, including food, ammunition and accommodation, as well as all movements and transport. The third was the Master General of the Ordnance branch ('MGO' branch), which looked after matters concerned with ordnance stores.[2]

In practice, the commanding officer of the unit or formation was responsible for supervision of all its functions but his most important responsibility, and therefore his prime concern, was the conduct of the unit in battle. The routine administration, therefore, had to be carried out by subordinates, each with a specific delegated responsibility. The table overleaf illustrates the manner in which this responsibility was assumed in a division in the First World War.[3]

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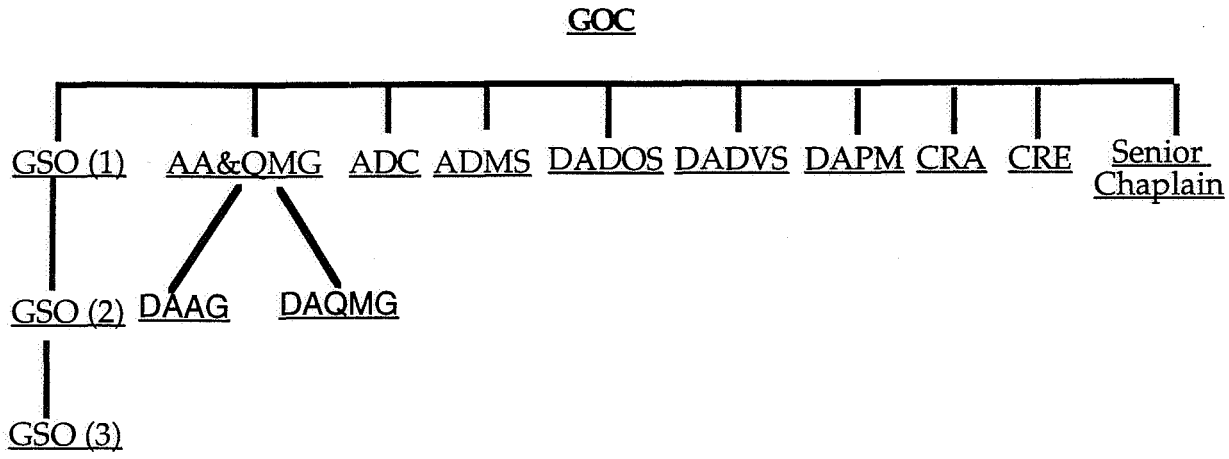
1 The information in the following section is derived from Colonel W.G. Lindsell, *Military Organisation and Administration*, Twelfth Edition (Aldershot: Gale and Polden Ltd, 1932), unless otherwise noted.

2 War Office, *Field Service Regulations*, 25

3 Lindsell, *Military Organisation*, 34.

Outline of Divisional H.Q. Staff



The GSO (1), the GSO(2) and the GSO (3) (General Staff Officer Grade 1, etc) aided the GOC in planning and management of the force in action and in the co-ordination of training when not in the line. The GSO(1) was normally a lieutenant colonel, the GSO (2) was a major and the GSO(3) a captain. At corps level, the senior general staff officer was a brigadier general and so was also known as the BGGS (Brigadier General General Staff). In an army, this function was performed by a MGGS (Major General General Staff).

The AA&QMG (Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General) was in charge of personnel and ordnance matters at the highest level. In particular, he was responsible for co-ordination and policy in those areas, the supply of military personnel, announcing and recording of promotions and honours, administration of medical services and issuing routine orders and administrative instructions.

The DAAG (Deputy Assistant Adjutant General) was responsible for a variety of matters including discipline, courts-martial, prisoners of war, leave, casualties, claims, reinforcements, working parties and fatigues, cookery and (with the DAPM) police matters and traffic circuits. He was responsible also for the maintenance of the divisional war diary in which was kept a record of the day to day events in the division.

The DAQMG (Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General) worked closely with a number of other staff officers in a variety of areas including

administrative instructions and maps, movements, transport, supplies of all kinds (including water, ammunition, equipment and ordnance), postal services, supply and care of the animals and salvage.

The ADC (aide-de-camp) was the GOC's personal assistant.

The ADMS (Assistant Director of Medical Services), with his medical officers, was the adviser to the GOC on all medical matters. He and the AA&QMG worked together in all matters to do with the physical and mental well-being of the troops.

The DADOS (Deputy Assistant Director of Ordnance Services) was responsible for the supply, maintenance and replacement of all equipment of the division. During the First World War, most clothing and rifles used by the AIF came from Australia but all other equipment and most ammunition came from the British, so he had to maintain close relations with the British Army 'Q' Staff.

The DADVS (Deputy Director of Veterinary Service) was responsible for the physical well-being of the divisional animals which were numerous since the divisional transport was to a large extent based on horse and mule wagons. His role, of course, was even more important in a Light Horse division.

The DAPM (Deputy Assistant Provost Marshal) was the chief police officer of the division and as such he worked with the 'A' Staff on questions affecting prisoners of war, police duties and traffic control.

The CRA (Commander Royal Artillery) was the senior gunner of the formation. Approximately equal in status to the three brigade commanders, he supervised planning of artillery 'shoots' and barrages and the training of officers and men in the artillery. He was also responsible for coordination with the artillery of other divisions and of the army as a whole and frequently commanded the division in the absence of the GOC.

The CRE (Commander Royal Engineers), like the CRA, held responsibilities approximately equivalent to those of the brigadiers, in that he was in charge of the specialist engineers of the division and of the performance of those engineering tasks allocated to him by the GOC. Like

the CRA, his principal function was to fulfil a fighting, not administrative, role in the division.

A vital part of the administration and planning of the division were the two key staff positions of the brigades, the brigade major and the staff captain. These two officers both worked in the field with the brigade headquarters. As a contemporary report stated:

> The Brigade Major is the officer in charge of operational matters, but the Staff Captain, as the administrative staff officer, deals with all administrative, quartermaster general and ordnance matters concerning the brigade. These are vital positions which are best held by well trained officers as they are the men in the front line who are responsible for the transfer of information to, and orders and planning from, the staff in the rear.[1]

The actual organisation of a division and a corps in 1917 is shown in the following charts.

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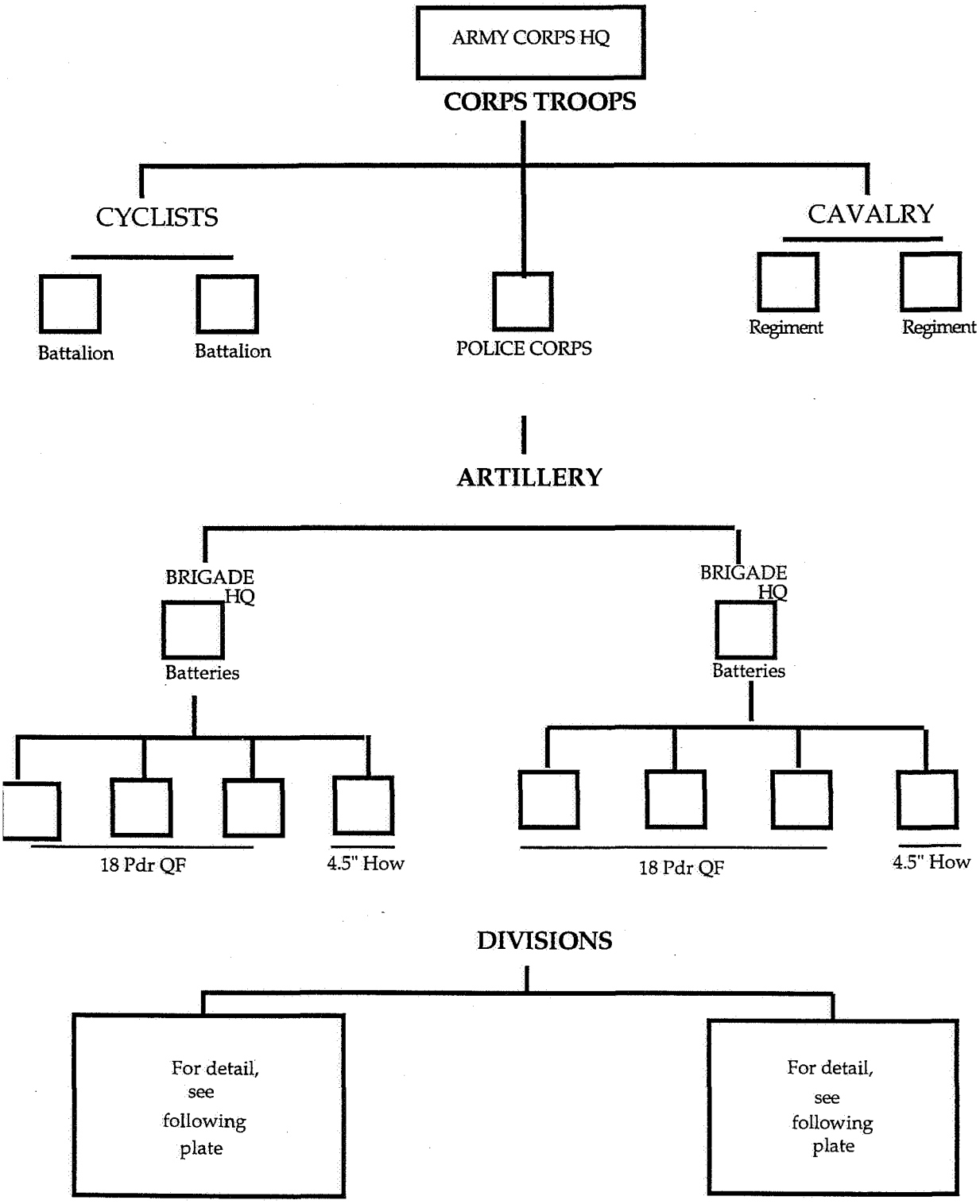
1 Durrant, 'Army Administration for War', a lecture presented in November 1933, Private Papers of J.M. Durrant, PR88/009, folder 6, AWM; 'Department of Defence Report on the Department of Defence From the First of July, 1914, until the Thirtieth of June, 1917' (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1917), 57- 61. Henceforth, Defence Report.

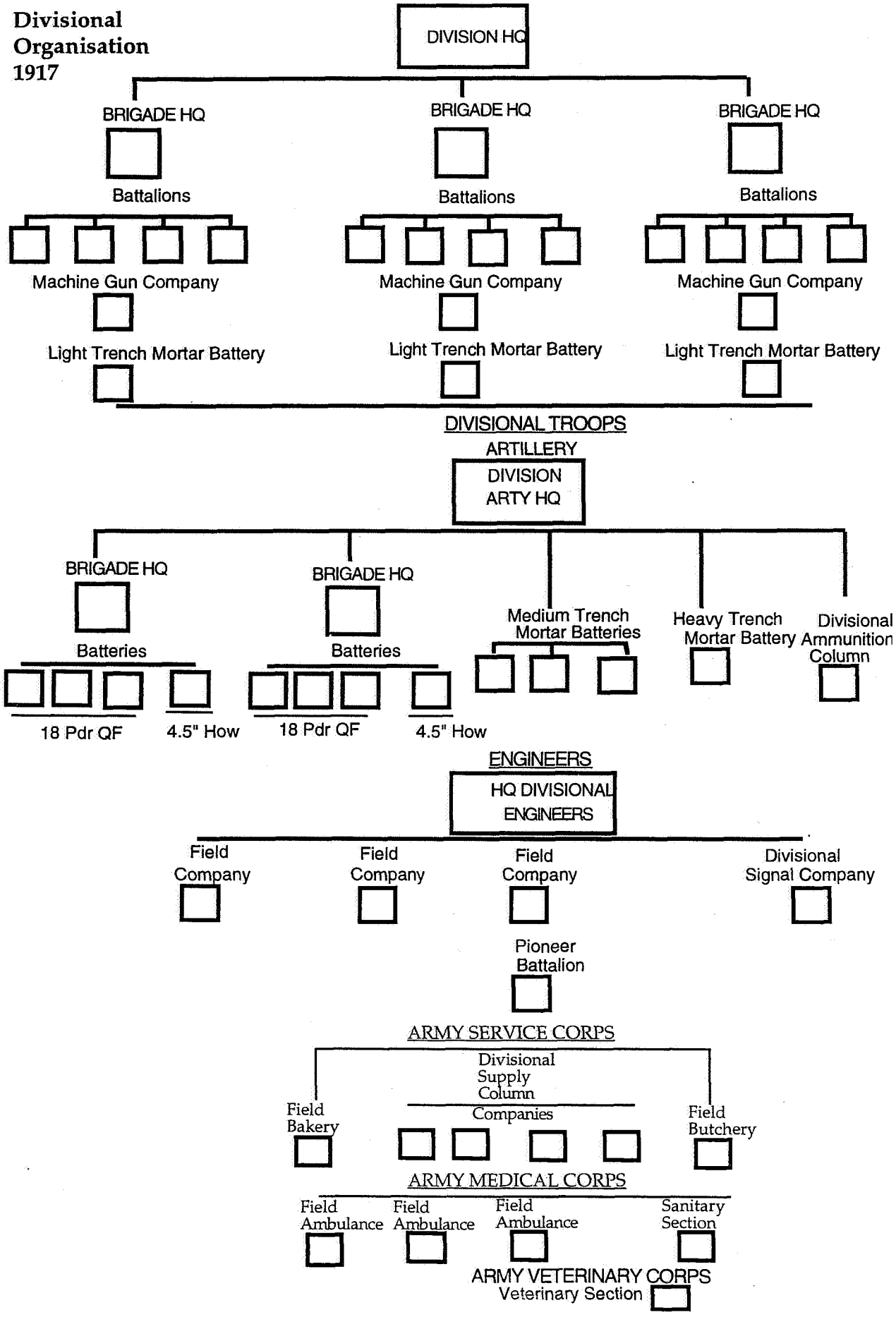
Corps Organisation 1917



NOTES

1. Each artillery battery had 6 guns; ie, the division had 36 18 Pdr QF and 12 4.5" Howitzers.
2. Each Machine Gun Company had 16 Vickers heavy machine guns, ie the division had 48 machine guns.
3. Each battalion, including the pioneer battalion, had 8 Lewis machine guns, ie there were 104 in the division.

Divisional Organisation 1917



In the larger formations, wherever possible the functions of administration were separated from those of combat planning. In smaller units, however, various officers would combine a number of these functions and they would receive appropriate training for these tasks within their units. During the nineteenth century the British saw that this was not a satisfactory method of training officers for the complex duties of a specialist staff officer. As a result, in 1858 they established a staff college at Camberley and later supplemented this with another at Quetta in what is now Pakistan. The graduates of these colleges were trained in higher administrative tasks and were designated by the initials 'psc' after their name in the army lists. They were then able to be posted to the staff of the larger formations where they wore the distinguishing red tab (or 'gorgette') on their collar that became so unpopular with many of the fighting soldiers in the First World War.

By 1914, this system of staff training had made little impact on either the Australian or Canadian armies. Both had established military colleges to train junior officers for their permanent forces (the Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston was established after legislation passed in 1874 and the Royal Military College, Duntroon was established in 1911) but these were not staff colleges and gave only an introduction to staff work. Any soldier who wished to attend staff college had to be admitted to Camberley or to Quetta.

In 1903 the Committee of Imperial Defence had decided that two places should be held for Canadian officers at Camberley as it perceived a need for more staff-trained officers in that dominion, and this offer was soon extended to Australia. In 1907, in an effort to increase further the numbers of staff officers in the Empire, Lord Esher expressed a wish to extend the size of the Staff College at Camberley. He had hoped that he could get these extensions paid for by the dominions but the idea was not accepted by their governments. Clearly they did not think the expense warranted, as in both countries the regular army was too small to support a large number of staff-trained officers and so, at this time, these dominions did not even fill the small number of places open to them at the colleges. The effect of this in Australia was shown in 1914: in the active army there were only three Australians, and two British Army officers on loan, who

had passed staff college. This number was to be increased by the one Australian who was attending Camberley on the outbreak of war.[1]

These Australian Staff College graduates indicated both the wisdom of their selection and the benefits of their training through their successful war service. Major C.B.B. (Brudenell) White in 1908 became the first Australian to graduate from Camberley and rose quickly to be BGGS of 1 ANZAC Corps, then MGGS of the Australian Corps, before being promoted to the position of Chief of Staff of the Fifth Army as a Lieutenant General in 1918. Major T.A. Blamey graduated from Quetta in 1913, and by 1918 was a brigadier general serving as MGGS of the Australian Corps. Major C.H. Foott was the AA&QMG of the AIF during 1915-17, before being made brigadier general and Chief Engineer of the Australian Corps. Captain J.D. Lavarack, who was attending Camberley when the war began, was a lieutenant colonel serving as GSO (1) of the 4th Division AIF in 1918. The two English psc graduates in the original AIF were killed in action. Major F.D. Irvine, when serving as the Brigade Major of the 1st Infantry Brigade, was killed on the second day of the landing at Gallipoli, and Duncan Glasfurd had risen from captain to brigadier general in command of the 12th Brigade when he was killed in the Battle of the Somme in 1916.

The number of Canadian officers who had passed through staff college was low also, with only eight serving officers having passed in June 1914, while another four were in attendance at the college. This meant that both armies were obliged to appoint British Army staff officers to their expeditionary forces. These British officers then served alongside dominion officers who had received little staff training. As will be seen, this was especially true in the AIF. The formation of staffs in which a majority of the officers had not had proper training in peace time is undoubtedly one reason for the administrative problems which both forces experienced in the early days of the war.[2]

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1 Preston, *Imperial Defense*, 318 and 373.

2 C.P. Stacey, 'The Staff Officer: A Footnote to Canadian Military History,' *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, Vol 20 (No. 1, Special No. 2/1990), 24. Note that Bezeau says there were 10 Canadian graduates plus 8 British graduates serving with the Canadians. Captain M.V. Bezeau, 'The Role and Organization of Canadian Military Staffs 1904-1945' (MA in War Studies thesis, Department of History, Royal Military College of Canada, 1978), 45.

Prior to the outbreak of the war in 1914, both the Australian and Canadian armies were remarkably similar in size. This is especially remarkable because Canada's population, estimated in 1913 as 7,758,000, was so much larger than Australia's which was only 4,733,359 on 31 December 1912. Each force consisted of a small cadre of professional soldiers and a larger group of militia. At the beginning of 1913, the 'Permanent Force' of the Australian Military Forces consisted of 280 officers and 2,626 men who were coupled to the Militia which, as a result of the introduction of a scheme of universal training on 1 January 1911, had grown to a size of 4,248 officers and 46,084 men. Compared to this, the Canadian full-time soldiers, called the 'Permanent Militia', numbered 368 officers and 2,715 men while the 'Active Militia' numbered 4,254 officers and 53,084 men.[1]

The professional soldiers in both forces had a number of duties. They formed a headquarters staff, worked as instructors or administrators, were area officers who worked closely with the local militia groups, manned various coastal forts, served in a variety of administrative posts (eg, in the Pay and Ordnance Departments), or held other sundry postings including attending or instructing at their respective Royal Military Colleges.

In Australia one important role for the permanent force was to provide instructors for the boys and youths who had been enrolled in the new universal training scheme. Under it boys began part-time training from the age of twelve. As they grew older, time spent in training increased. As the scheme had been operating for only three years when war was declared, there were comparatively few men who had completed their training at this time and only 16,000 were counted as being trained in 1914. This militia could not be sent overseas because of the terms of the 1903 Defence Act but numbers of these men enlisted the 1st Division. This is because efforts were made to ensure that those men who were enlisted in the ranks of the AIF were either serving in the AMF, had served in Imperial Forces or had served in the militia. During the war the AIF, raised as a separate army because of the Defence Act, existed as a parallel force to the Australian Military Forces (AMF).[2]

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1 Return Showing Establishment, Strength, Organization and Training of the Land Forces of British Dominions Beyond the Seas [n.d.], 4, 10-14, WO 33/682, PRO.

2 Strength of Military Forces, *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia,* No 8, 1915 (Melbourne: McCarron, Bird & Co, 1915), 943; Defence Report, 29.

Initially, most officers in the AIF came from the ranks of the AMF or the pre-war militia. Of the 631 officers in the division, 68 were, or had been, permanent officers in the AMF and 402 were officers in the Militia at the outbreak of the war. In general, the administrative posts in the division were filled by members of the Permanent Force. Senior NCOs in the battalions and units came from the AMF and sometimes the PMF (especially the RSM and CSM), but the rest of the NCOs were appointed from the ranks of the volunteers. This decision meant that only 82 out of the 568 warrant officers and NCOs of the AMF were allowed to join the AIF. There is some evidence that this was not a popular decision with NCOs in the AMF, as at least one, Staff Sergeant Verney Asser, deserted and sailed to Egypt as a stowaway where he was allowed to enlist as a private in the AIF in February 1916. This was to have tragic, if unintended, consequences as Asser later murdered a fellow soldier in England and subsequently became the only AIF soldier to be executed in the First World War.[1]

A regular officer would have a permanent rank in the AMF but could obtain a higher, though temporary, rank in the AIF. Seniority of officers in the AIF was determined within that force. At first, seniority for appointments as officers in the AIF was determined by the pre-war gradation list of the AMF which incorporated both permanent and militia officers. As discussed below, this was to be the basis of some complaints over promotion as some officers objected to being superseded by men who had been junior to them in the old gradation lists. However, in 1914 seniority was accepted as being the only fair means of selecting senior officers.

The Canadian system was slightly different. Like the AMF, the Canadian Militia could be called upon as an organised body to serve only in the defence of Canada, and so the Canadians also had to form a force to serve overseas, the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF). As in the AIF, most of its officers came from the Militia, with a leavening of officers from the Permanent Militia, who again filled most of the administrative posts. The CEF, however, did have more trained staff officers than the AIF because in 1905 the Canadians had been able to form their own General Staff and had begun training militia officers in staff work. A Militia Staff Course was instigated in which militia candidates attended lectures and practical

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1 *Official History Vol I,* 54; Defence Report, 29; Bridges to Pearce, August 1914, Proposals for the First Division, AWM 27, item 302 [3], AWM; AWM 10, item 4304/9/75 AWM.

demonstrations and sat for examinations. If they were successful in these, they were entitled to have 'msc' (*militia staff course*) placed after their names in the *Militia List*. In June 1914, 118 officers of the Canadian Militia were listed as having passed this course. This was not, unfortunately, as great an advantage to the Canadians as one would suppose, since none of them was employed in staff positions in the CEF because only staff college graduates were considered qualified for these positions.[1]

These men helped Canada achieve the requirements of the British CIGS, Sir William Nicholson, who, while stressing the need for uniformity in the forces of the Empire at the CID meeting on 1 August 1911, had emphasised that any expeditionary force should be accompanied by a due proportion of administrative officers 'both with and in the rear of the fighting troops'. He continued by stating that organisation, administration and training, as far as practical, should be in accordance with the Home Army Field Service Manuals and the dominions would 'adopt, as far as possible, Imperial patterns of arms, equipment and stores'. Although it met the first requirements, the CEF, despite prior planning, did not fit this last part of the model. This was in contrast to the AIF, even though the latter was raised with little benefit of prior planning.[2]

In 1911, unlike Canada and New Zealand, Australia had failed to prepare a scheme for the defence of the country in the event of war. Nicholson urged that this should be completed and that it should include a plan for mobilising a force to send overseas. As a result of his urgings, Bridges and White began work on a defence scheme and had completed proof copies by August 1913. The great weakness of this scheme in the eyes of the British was that it included no formal plan for sending an expeditionary force overseas. This was despite the fact that Australia had held discussions with New Zealand officials in November 1912 in which it was agreed that the two dominions should plan to send overseas a combined force of approximately one division.[3]

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1 Kenneth Charles Eyre, 'Staff and Command in the Canadian Corps. The Canadian Militia 1896-1914 as a Source of Senior Officers' (MA thesis, Department of History, Duke University, 1967), 94-96; Bezeau, 'Canadian Military Staffs', 49.

2 Minutes of the 119th meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence Sub-conference on Military Defence, 1 August 1912, Borden Papers, reel C4210, NAC.

3 Proceedings of the Imperial Conference, WO 106/43, PRO; Mordike, *Army for a Nation*, 244.

White and Bridges did lay the basis for fulfilling this agreement in part because the scheme anticipated several reasons for the mounting of an expeditionary force. It foresaw a situation in which Australia might have to defend itself without the aid of the Royal Navy. In such a case, Western Australia might be seen as an attractive target for enemy raids or even an invasion force. If either of these occurred, the absence of a transcontinental railway system meant that defensive troops could be sent west only by sea. If for no other reason, this meant that there had to be some planning for an expeditionary force.[1]

Further basis was laid for an expedition because the plan recognised that 'a defensive attitude of a purely passive nature is . . . the most ineffectual method of employing an army as an instrument of policy'. It then indicated that at the 1909 Imperial Conference there was a general agreement that each member of the Empire should be prepared 'if it should so desire to take its share in the general defence of the Empire'. In accordance with both these principles, the scheme recognised the possible need to send an expeditionary force to attack nearby regions in the Pacific which might be held by an enemy. However, because the scheme recognised that under the provisions of section 49 of the Defence Act, such an expeditionary force could not be mounted using AMF forces, it did not contain plans for one at the time.[2]

Some of the wording of this scheme reflects a memorandum sent by the Committee of Imperial Defence on 11 April 1913. This urged upon Australia the desirability of its being prepared to equip and send an expeditionary force overseas since 'a purely passive defence is the most ineffectual method of employing an army'. Although it recommended that Australia be ready to send such a force against foreign territory in Australian waters, it argued that Australia should also recognise that a serious international situation might demand the employment of this force 'at the decisive point.' Given that Bridges had served on the CID, it is quite probable that he was using this memorandum as the basis for a plan which would achieve British aims for an Australian contingent in an Imperial Army.[3]

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1 General Scheme of Defence Commonwealth of Australia, AWM 113, item MH 1/11.
2 Ibid.
3 Memorandum approved by the Committee of Imperial Defence at the 123rd Meeting 11 April 1913, and issued as CID paper 99/C, AA 5954, item 1719/7, AA.

Because of the dialogue with New Zealand, and, perhaps, the imperial leanings he shared with Bridges, by August 1914 Brudenell White, then Director of Military Operations, had prepared a secret plan for sending overseas a mixed division from Australia and New Zealand. After war was declared on 4 August 1914, he adapted this plan so that, despite some initial difficulties, a contingent with representative units from all states was ready to be sent overseas in six weeks.[1]

The institution of the universal training scheme had led Australia to build up 'mobilisation stores' of rifles, clothing and equipment and it was these stockpiles which were used as far as possible to outfit the AIF. It is a measure of the degree of Australia's readiness in some areas that it had on hand over 87,000 rifles, which compares very favourably with the 400,000 held by the War Office in Britain. Mobilisation tables were hastily produced and by following these, the ordnance department was able to ensure that the AIF met British requirements in that its establishments, weapons, transport and equipment were all of the British pattern. Only in clothing and webbing were there any differences, the former being of a distinctive Australian pattern and the latter being made of leather as this was produced cheaply in Australia. There were some local difficulties in supplying clothing but these were all solved by the time the force was ready to sail.[2]

Formation of the Expeditionary Forces

Having made the decision to send a force of one division, the Australian Government through Senator George Foster Pearce (Minister for Defence 1908-9, 1910-13 and 1914-21) promoted Brigadier General Bridges to Major General and appointed him to raise and lead the expeditionary force. Bridges chose a mixture of militia, regular and British officers as the senior and administrative officers of the 1st Division of the AIF. To head the 1st Brigade he chose Lieutenant Colonel H.N. MacLaurin, a Sydney barrister and militia officer who was killed in action on 27 April 1915. The 2nd Brigade was given to another militia officer, Colonel J.M. McCay, later Lieutenant General Sir James McCay. McCay had been Defence Minister

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1 These attitudes come out clearly in letters written to Bridges eg White to Bridges, 4 March 1908, 29 June 1909, 25 March 1909, Bridges Papers, ADFA; C.E.W. Bean, *Two Men I Knew* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1957), 88-90.

2 Defence Report, 246-249, 255.

from 1904 to 1905 and was to command the 5th Division for a time in 1916 before being posted to England in charge of training depots for the AIF. The 3rd Brigade was assigned to an English regular officer who had been instructing at RMC Duntroon, Lieutenant Colonel E.G. Sinclair-Maclagan (in 1917-1919 as a Major General he was to command the 4th Australian Division). Finally, Bridges chose a regular officer who was serving as the Australian representative on the Imperial General Staff, Colonel H.G. Chauvel to head the Light Horse Brigade. In 1917 Chauvel became Lieutenant General Sir Harry Chauvel commanding the Desert Mounted Corps. All more junior administrative posts in the 1st Division were filled by regular British or Australian officers.

The selection of the junior officers for the brigades caused some problems as this task was delegated to the brigade commanders themselves and there were complaints that often they chose officers on the basis of their connections rather than their ability. Subsequently, the responsibility for the selection of officers for future contingents was placed in the hands of 'selection boards consisting of the District Commandant and three senior citizen-officers' from the district in which the unit was raised. After the landing at Gallipoli, these boards became less important, as officers were almost entirely promoted from the ranks and this became the established process by which almost all Australian officers were selected during the war.[1]

One exception to the process of commanders choosing their officers was Bridges' insistence that the senior class at RMC Duntroon be asked if it wished to graduate early to enable it to enlist in the AIF. The response from the 27 cadets was unanimous and after their enlistment they were commissioned and then posted to the various units, as infantry and Light Horse subalterns but with many in specialist positions (engineers, gunners and machine gun officers). Later when the 4th Brigade was formed, the 30 members of the second class at RMC were also graduated early (2 November 1915) and the brigade was instructed to allocate four to each battalion. It was recommended that they would be suitable as machine gun, signalling or subaltern officers.[2]

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1 *Official History, Vol I*, 54.

2 Defence Report, 407; Circular Memo Number 5, 4th Infantry Brigade, 21 October 1914, AWM 25, item 138/1, AWM.

In the initial stages of mobilisation, a number of administrative problems emerged and these appear to reflect the haste with which the plans for the force had been drawn up. These problems certainly varied from brigade to brigade, since they were raised on a state basis and did not collect in one central camp for training. However, a critique of the process, as it was experienced by the 1st Brigade, was recorded in that unit's War Diary by its commander, Colonel MacLaurin, and this almost certainly gives some idea of the problems faced to a greater or lesser extent by all brigades. That all brigades had administrative difficulties (due to a wide variety of reasons) is indicated by the paucity of the War Diary entries for all brigades for this period and the almost universal failure to complete the necessary administrative paper-work before the AIF sailed.

MacLaurin thought that there was a lack of system in the manner in which the force was raised. This probably reflected the speed with which plans had to be drawn up but it caused the commanding officers many problems. The obvious failing here was that there had been no attempt made to create a nucleus for units or their headquarters with the result that an immense amount of clerical work fell onto the shoulders of a few men. An example of the difficulties that emerged from this was that each battalion was asked to produce fourteen nominal rolls for each company (a total of 480 rolls). Because the forms were too large for a typewriter each roll had to be hand-written and each roll had to be signed by a CO who was trying to equip, train and discipline a large group of high spirited men.[1]

In all formations there was a resultant general failure on the part of the staff to supervise adequately the drawing up of nominal rolls and allotment forms. The former recorded the names of the men, their units and various other pieces of information needed for the efficient location of the troops abroad and important to their relatives back in Australia. Through the latter the men gave the government permission to withhold some of their pay and pass it to their dependants. This was not a case of administration for its own sake; these nominal rolls were vital for the efficient administration of the formation. For example, in the first case, the failure to fill in either or both of these correctly could cause problems in delivering the men's mail and notifying relatives of casualties. In the

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1 Colonel H.N. MacLaurin, War Diary First Infantry Brigade, Appendix 28, 'Confidential Report on the Raising and Equipping of the First Infantry Brigade', AWM 4, item 23/1/3 Part 2, AWM.

second case, such failure could result in financial hardship for their dependants.

These administrative failures were drawn to the attention of the Commandants of all states by the Department of Defence on 27 November. It informed them that 'great indifference and neglect' by certain commanding officers and men were leading to many complaints and to hardship for dependants, and commanding officers were to regard it as a 'personal obligation and duty' to ensure that these forms were filled in correctly. This still did not solve the problem and in 1918 the Royal Commission into the Navy and Defence Departments found that pay sheets had not been sent to Melbourne and that some were even carried by the responsible officers to Egypt and Gallipoli. Pearce was later to excuse this, saying that men were 'flocking into the camps throughout Australia. There were not sufficient trained staff to deal with them and this had to be improvised from such material as was available.' Officers knew that they only had a short time before embarkation and so they 'were more impressed with the necessity of drilling and equipping their men than with the due observance of Finance and Treasury regulations.'[1]

Both the 2nd and 3rd Brigades found difficulties in getting ordnance and clothing, as attested to in both their rather abbreviated War Diaries for this period. MacLaurin's more detailed account indicated that some goods were slow to arrive due to difficulties caused by inexperienced ordnance staff who required an officer to sign for all goods. A worse problem was that some goods were simply not available, especially tents which were in short supply all over Australia.[2]

Due to a shortage of tents, the 1st Brigade had to be housed at Randwick Racecourse, which caused further problems. As MacLaurin put it, 'It is not too much to say that the First Infantry Brigade has been continuously hampered in equipping itself, in its organisation, its training and its discipline, by thus being kept in the vicinity of the city in place of

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1 Department of Defence to Commandants of all States, 27 November 1914, AWM 25, item 743/3, AWM; Memorandum by the Minister of Defence on The Second Progress Report of the Royal Commission on Navy and Defence Administration, 15 March 1918, A6006/1, Fourth Hughes Ministry, 10 January 1918 - August 1918, AA.

2 War Diary, 2nd Infantry Brigade, AWM 4, item 23/2/1, 'Formation, Organisation and Training of the Infantry Brigade AIF - August September 1914', 2; War Diary, 3rd Infantry Brigade, AWM 4, item 23/3/1, AWM; Defence Report, 254.

being camped in the country.' The result was a large number of absentees and desertions, a considerable loss of clothing and equipment and the beginnings of the AIF's great difficulty with venereal disease. These disciplinary problems were again mirrored in other states and caused the same concern. The vicinity of all camps was soon crowded with prostitutes, and men frequently went absent without leave to visit hotels which, in turn, led to a subsequent further loss of discipline.[1]

MacLaurin blamed part of the ordnance problem on the praiseworthy attempts by the prewar Australian Government to diversify its ordnance manufacturing centres. In 1910, the Commonwealth Government had authorised the establishment of four factories to manufacture ordnance (small arms, clothing, cordite and leather goods) in an attempt to promote local industry and to attain some degree of local autonomy. Clearly wishing to placate inter-state rivalries, the Government had established the arms factory in NSW and the others in Victoria but further ordnance orders were placed in other states. In 1914 this caused problems because goods came from widely separated areas and they could be difficult to get. For example, trousers for dungaree suits came from Melbourne while the coats came from Sydney and boots from 'elsewhere'.[2]

Remarkably, despite the difficulties it faced, the 1st Division had been outfitted, given some training and was ready to sail by the end of October. It expected to be based in England for final training before being sent to France. In keeping with their pre-war planning, Bridges and White expected that in France the AIF would be treated simply as another division in the British Army and not as a special national contingent. As with the CEF, the AIF would be 'Imperial', ie 'soldiers of the British Army recruited from the Empire'. Having been fitted out, it would be maintained by the British Government at Australia's expense.[3]

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1 MacLaurin, First Brigade War Diary; Scott, *Official History Vol XI*, 228; C.D. Coulthard-Clerk, *A Heritage of Spirit: A Biography of Major-General Sir William Throsby Bridges K.C.B., C.M.G.* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1979), 126.

2 Scott, *Official History Vol XI*, 228.

3 White to Bean, 8 May 1924, Bean Papers, AWM 38, 3 DRL 606, item 255, AWM; Desmond Morton, '"Junior but Sovereign Allies": The Transformation of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, VIII, 1 (October 1979), 57.

Unlike the Australians, the Canadian forces did have a plan for the mobilisation and dispatch of an expeditionary force. Between 1911 and 1913 a scheme had been drawn up to furnish a division of infantry and a brigade of cavalry for service in the British forces in the event of a war. However, this proved to be of no advantage to the Canadians since on the declaration of war, the Minister of Militia, Colonel Sam Hughes, altered the plan and caused great confusion. The force was gathered together at Valcartier camp near Quebec City and there prepared for the move to Europe. When it was fully equipped to move, its establishments and artillery equipment were of a British pattern, but most of the remaining equipment was not and this was to cause further problems.[1]

The most obvious and contentious difference between the CEF and the rest of the British Army (including the AIF) was that its standard rifle was not the Short Magazine Lee Enfield but the Ross. The principal reason for the difference was that the Canadians found themselves unable to get rifles during the Boer War and so the Government decided to establish a factory to manufacture rifles in Quebec. When the Lee Enfield Company refused to establish a plant in Canada, the Canadians decided to manufacture an experimental rifle invented by an eccentric Scotsman, Sir Charles Ross.[2]

In 1901, 'the British Government communicated its displeasure to the Canadians that the idea of a uniform pattern of arms for the empire had been violated', but the Canadians continued to manufacture and issue it as the standard infantry weapon. Despite some teething problems, the rifle soon proved to be extremely accurate in the hands of a trained marksman and because of this it was championed by Hughes, a keen shooter. Other Canadian equipment also failed to fit into the British pattern, some because contracts for manufacture of equipment for the Militia had long been a means of patronage by both political parties in Canada, and some, as will be seen, because of the idiosyncrasies of Sam Hughes.[3]

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1 A.F. Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-1919, General Series Vol 1. Chronology, Appendices and Maps* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938), 4; Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, 18-19.

2 Ronald Haycock, 'Early Canadian Weapons Acquisition: " — That Damned Ross Rifle", *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, Vol 14, 3 (Winter 1984/85), 48; Captain J.F. Cummins, 'Imperial Conferences and Imperial Defence', *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, IV: 1 (October 1926), 9.

3 William Beahen, 'A Citizens' Army: The Growth and Development of the Canadian Militia, 1904 to 1914' (PhD thesis, University of Ottawa, 1980), 267-275; Desmond Morton,

Despite his very aggressive nationalism, Hughes was content to appoint a British officer, Major General E.A.H. Alderson, to command the CEF. Kitchener had originally offered the names of three Canadians serving in the British Army for the position, but Hughes rejected them on the grounds that they were neither senior nor experienced enough. He then selected Alderson from three British officers on a list furnished by Kitchener. Most other senior officers were Canadians, although many of the General Staff and administrative positions were also filled by British officers.

Having selected its officers and undergone some training, the CEF was able to embark for England amid scenes of great confusion exactly one month before the AIF. The Australians delayed sailing until they knew that the convoy was safe from attack from the German Navy's Pacific Squadron and they had been joined by the New Zealand contingent. As a result of this delay, the CEF arrived in England on 14 October 1914 whereas the AIF did not even sail until 1 November.

This early arrival of the Canadians allowed the British and Australian Governments to learn from what turned out to be an unfortunate Canadian experience. When it arrived in England, the CEF was sent to camps on Salisbury Plain, where the AIF also expected to be sent. The Canadian experience there was chaotic due to the deplorable weather. Five and a quarter inches of rain fell from 21 to 26 October alone and this was followed by further abnormal rainfall in the succeeding weeks. Soon the camps became quagmires and, as most soldiers had to sleep in tents in abnormally cold weather, the conditions gave rise to the danger of massive outbreaks of sickness.[1]

Seeing the Canadian problems, Lord Kitchener urged that the Australians should train in Egypt rather than England because of the danger of sickness among the troops. Although there had been some suggestions before the war that the Australasian troops could be sent to defend Egypt in the event of a war with Turkey, Kitchener pledged that on completion of its training the AIF would be sent to France. Despite this promise, and his

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Ministers and Generals: Politics and the Canadian Militia 1868-1904 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 119-122.

1 Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, 35-6.

assurance that the British had adequate troops in the country to defend it, there is no doubt that his suggestion to train the ANZAC troops in Egypt was influenced by the threat to the country which emerged after the British declaration of war on Turkey on 5 November. This is indicated by a telegram sent by the Secretary for State for the Colonies stating that these troops were being sent to Egypt to complete their training and 'for the defence of the country.'[1]

This British suggestion was accepted after a report concerning the camp site was received from representatives of the High Commissioner's office on 11 November. The Australian High Commissioner in London, Sir George Reid, cabled that it was impossible to establish camps anywhere else but on Salisbury Plain and that he did not recommend this, since the 'effect on Canadian forces now encamped there [was] serious especially as regards discipline'. As a result of this change in plans, when the AIF arrived in Alexandria on 3 December 1914 it disembarked and was moved to Mena Camp, fifteen kilometres south west of Cairo. Here, despite a few minor problems due to shortages of lights and tents, it began its training.[2]

It was here that the AIF was joined on 21 December by the officer who had been appointed to command the 'Australian and New Zealand Army Corps' as it became known. Major General Sir William Birdwood, an Indian Army officer, had been recommended to command this corps by Lord Kitchener on whose staff he had served in South Africa and India. In his autobiography, Birdwood claims that he was appointed to this command by Kitchener because of his frequent and very cordial dealings with Australians during the Boer War. Because of this, Kitchener considered that Birdwood would again be able to manage such troops successfully. It is probable that Kitchener was also motivated by the opportunity to further, once more, the career of a valued and capable subordinate and friend.[3]

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1 Sir Henry Wilson to Sir A.J. Godley, 1 January 1912, WO 106/59, PRO; Sir George Reid to Minister for Defence, 17 November 1918, B 539/1, item 79/1/98, AA; Telegram, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor Generals of Australia and New Zealand, 2 December 1914, CO 616/8, PRO.

2 B 539, item AIF 112/2/303, AA; High Commissioner to Minister of Defence, 18 November 1914, B 539/1, item 79/1/98, AA; Bridges to Pearce, 19 December 1914, B 539, item AIF 112/2/292, AA; Bridges to Pearce, 8 January 1915, B 539, item AIF 112/6/18, AA.

3 Dispatch No. 7 Bridges to Pearce, 8 January 1915, B 539/1, AIF 112/2/322, AA; Field Marshal Lord Birdwood, *Khaki and Gown: An Autobiography* (London: Ward, Lock and Co, 1941), 124, 240; Carruthers to Bean, entry 31 May 1918, Bean Diaries, AWM 38, 3 DRL 606, item 113, AWM.

Birdwood, a professional military officer since acceptance into Sandhurst in 1884, had been nine years on Kitchener's staff in South Africa as well as 'all his years in India'. Good administration requires training and experience and while Birdwood had not attended a staff college, he was very experienced in military administration. He had been Kitchener's DAAG in South Africa from 1900 to 1902 and had then served as his Assistant Military Secretary and Military Secretary when Kitchener was Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from 1903 to 1909. During this time he developed a firm friendship with this very solitary man, as is evidenced by Kitchener's acting as godfather to Birdwood's second daughter, and by his leaving £200 (no mean sum in those days) to Birdwood in his will.[1]

Birdwood brought with him a corps staff which he had been ordered to gather from the Indian Army because there were no spare staff officers in London. Two of these were especially capable soldiers. They were his chief of staff, Brigadier General H.B. Walker, who was to prove an able commander of the 1st Division from 1915 to 1918, and the BGGS, Lt Col A Skeen, psc (who had been lecturing at the staff college at Quetta for the previous three years). There were only two 'psc men' on Birdwood's Corps Staff, compared to five on the staff of the 1st Division (including the ex-British Army officer, Major John Gellibrand, who rose to command the 3rd Division in 1918). There were more psc men on the CEF staffs but the Australian number was still reasonable given that there were only 447 officers in the British Army of 1914 with staff training, and these were in great demand everywhere owing to the rapid expansion of the Army.[2]

That the administration of the Anzac Corps was under a corps staff composed of British officers does not appear to have caused great resentment in the AIF at this time. Certainly both Bridges and White believed that the AIF should have come under British control once it reached Egypt, and White considered that it was a 'kind' act on the part of Birdwood when he later appointed White onto the Corps staff, 'purely a

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1 Birdwood to Pearce, 27 June 1916, AWM 38, 3 DRL 3376, item 26(b), AWM; Birdwood, *Khaki and Gown*; chapters XI-XIX; Lord Kitchener's will, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57, No. 99, PRO.

2 Secretary for the War Office to CIC in London, 23 November 1914, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 55, AWM; Bean, *Official History Vol I*, 280, 124; Shelford Bidwell & Dominick Graham, *Firepower: British Army Weapons and Theories of War 1904-1945*, (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1985), 2.

voluntary action on his part'. This Australian attitude was probably helped by the fact that, in contrast to the Canadian situation, there was no attempt to place British officers in the key lower echelon positions of brigade major and staff captain. In the four infantry brigades and three light horse brigades originally sent to Gallipoli, only one brigade major was British (Captain F.D. Irvine) and he was killed on 27 April. It should be pointed out, however, that the staff captains in the first three brigades were all British regular officers who had been working in Australia in 1914.[1]

Preston has expressed surprise that Bridges and White (and presumably the brigade majors) were retained in their positions instead of being replaced as in the CEF. He considers that the chief reason for this was that the AIF was a smaller force (although only marginally so, and then only for a short period) 'and that it served at first in a more remote "colonial" theatre'. Perhaps there was also respect for the known ability of Bridges and White and for their known imperial sympathies. Whatever the reason, this decision ensured that by the time the Australian divisions were moved to France, the AIF had a solid core of experienced junior staff officers who retained their positions and whose success helped convince the British that they could transfer all British officers out of the AIF.[2]

By January 1915 both the AIF and the CEF were training hard in their respective locations, ready to be sent to the front. They had begun to develop, in their own ways, an administrative system which would improve as the war progressed. They were having some problems, especially with discipline, but they had been incorporated into the British Army with a minimum of difficulties. In the next four years various problems would emerge in their respective administrations, but each would overcome these so well that the performance of the administration would at least match that of the troops in the field.

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1 White to Bean, 8 May 1924, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 255, AWM; White to Bean, Bean diaries, entry 23 March 1916, AWM 38, 3 DRL 606, item 40, AWM; Bean, *Official History Vol. I*, 51, 137-138.

2 Preston, *Imperial Defense*, 472.

Chapter 2

Higher Administrative Organisation in the AIF

Having arrived at their final training camps before they embarked for the front, both the Australians and the Canadians had to define their positions in relation to the British. They soon found that those efforts made before the war to build up a common military system were not enough on which to base a sound administration in the unexpected conditions of the First World War. Now numerous administrative arrangements had to be made from a national level down to unit administration in the field.

To this end the greatest effort had to be put into devising a system of 'higher level administrative arrangements' to integrate the dominions' national administrations with those of both the British Government and the British Army. To understand what this meant in the context of the AIF, it is necessary to understand the system of higher level administration that evolved during the war. By contrasting this with the system used by the Canadians, it will be possible to see that the AIF was remarkably successful in developing a workable system — a system that deserved more attention than it received from the Official Historian.

These administrative arrangements are especially important because they helped give expression to a burgeoning nationalism. During the war Australians and Canadians developed a greater sense of national identity and confidence through their military ability. At Gallipoli and in France, Australians often expressed this through disparagement of the ability of British soldiers of all ranks. In Britain, soldiers on leave and the officers charged with trying to prevent or cure their venereal diseases expressed it by indicating a growing contempt for the social conditions and perceived immorality of the country. Even so, many of the same soldiers gleefully contributed to this immorality when on leave! This growth in nationalism and self confidence led to the dominions wanting greater recognition within the imperial framework and between 1914 and 1918 both Australia and Canada to some extent reduced their pre-war subservience to Britain. This change, which was expected by neither the dominions nor the British Government, found expression also in the military administration of the two dominions.

At the beginning of the war, in similar ways, both the Canadians and the Australians expressed their initial willingness to subordinate themselves completely to the British system. The Australians cabled London and informed the Secretary of State for the Colonies that they assumed 'that the responsibility for command and maintenance and administration while in England and in the field will devolve on [the] home Government.' The Canadians expressed the imperial sentiment even more explicitly by stating that 'The Canadian Expeditionary Force will be entirely under the War Office. It will be Imperial and have the same status, privileges and obligations as British regular troops.'[1]

Bridges, as commander of the 1st Australian Division, had expected that he would not retain complete command of all Australian forces. As White expressed it after the war:

> The autonomous administration and the future was not foreseen . . . At the outset we never had a clear idea that the administration of whatever force Australia raised would be completely autonomous and vested in any Australian officer. Our ideas at the time of the preparation of the Order in Council giving the G.O.C.A.I.F. certain powers only saw through the glass darkly. That imperfect vision is portrayed in the Order in Council itself. We thought that as in Africa administration would fall almost entirely on the British machinery. But vaguely it was realized that there should be with the AIF some piece of Australian mechanism which would fit into the British machinery and so conserve and co-ordinate Australian requirements — the while keeping it in touch with Australia.[2]

At the time, Bridges expressed this attitude and his imperial sympathies by stating that while the AIF was in Britain he did not want a special depot for 'the equipment and maintenance of Australian troops *instead of welding them to the Imperial Forces'* (emphasis added). He was, however, agreeable to the establishment of some kind of intermediary base to coordinate action by the Home and Local Authorities (ie British and

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1 Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24 October 1914, CO 616/7, PRO; Major General W.G. Gwatkin (Canadian Chief of Staff) to L.C. Christie (the Prime Minister's personal adviser on political affairs), 1 October 1914, Gwatkin Papers, MG 30, E 51, NAC.

2 White to Bean, 8 May 1924, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, Item 255, AWM.

Australian, the terms are illustrative of his attitude) as Australia was bearing the whole cost of the AIF.[1]

At first the War Office seems to have agreed to this role and it appears that it was slow to realise that these were separate national contingents. At different times both the dominion commanders (Bridges and Alderson) were told they were restricted in their right to communicate with their home government. Alderson was ordered outright to communicate with Canada only through the War Office, while Bridges (presumably because he was not a British officer) was told that he should communicate only 'on matters of detail or routine', and he was to transmit all matters of organisation or changes in establishment and equipment through the War Office. There is no record that Bridges complained about this order, unlike Alderson who argued that direct communications with Canada were more efficient, especially as the Canadian Government wrote to him directly. It soon became obvious that restricting the leader of a national contingent in this way was unworkable and the order was subsequently rescinded. The leader and senior administrator of all national contingents were then officially able to correspond directly with their national governments.[2]

Both Australia and Canada sent away their expeditionary forces with no clear idea of the administrative structure which would be needed to maintain them. Faced with necessity, both dominions developed a rudimentary form of administration. However, as the forces increased in size and their and British needs changed, this administrative organisation evolved into something quite different by the end of the war. Included in this evolution were the development of various echelons, and changes in the structure and methods of command, and among the commanders themselves.

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1 Memorandum from Bridges, 30 September 1914, B 539, item A 112/2/116, AA.

2 War Office to GOC Southern Command, 27 November 1914, A.F. Duguid, *Official History of The Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-1919: Chronology, Appendices and Maps* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938), 137; War Office to GOC Egypt, 19 December 1914, War Diary Admin Staff Anzac Corps, AWM 4, item 1/28/2, AWM; Alderson to HQ Southern Command, 8 December 1914, Duguid, *Appendices*, 138.

Australian Administrative Structures

Initially, Bridges exercised command over both the 1st Division and the administration of the AIF but he soon abrogated the latter duty. When he was forming the AIF, Bridges had written to the Minister of Defence (at that time Senator E.D. Millen) requesting certain powers. Millen accepted most of his suggestions (but not all, the Minister refusing to agree to the establishment of an intermediate base in London), and they were promulgated by an Order in Council gazetted on 17 September 1914. Included in Bridges' powers were the promotion of officers, the power to change and vary units in any manner that he believed was expedient, the ability to transfer officers and men and to hire and transfer civilian employees where necessary. Other responsibilities of the GOC AIF, not included in this Order in Council, were such matters as establishing policies for training and discipline, overseeing the control and issue of ordnance and supplies, and the supervision of such administrative services as the delivery of mail, payment of the troops, payment of accounts and the keeping of base records.[1]

It quickly became obvious in Egypt that the exercise of any of Bridges' statutory powers could interfere with the powers and plans of either Birdwood or Lieutenant General Sir John Maxwell, who was Commander-in-chief of British forces in Egypt because the Order in Council was issued

> subject to such arrangements as may be made by His Majesty's Secretary for State for War while the Australian Imperial Force is in England, and to the orders and regulations issued by the Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Forces while abroad.

Clearly this gave the British grounds to issue orders which superseded Bridges' own. The result was, that in Egypt initially, there was no clear chain of command.[2]

The problem arose out of the roles of the three main generals: Bridges was GOC AIF, Birdwood was commander of the Australian and New Zealand Corps while Maxwell was commander in Egypt. Thus in some areas Bridges was subordinate to Birdwood, in most areas Birdwood was subordinate to Maxwell, but in other areas Bridges was supreme. To help

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1 Bridges to Pearce, 11 September 1914, AWM 25, item 9/8, AWM.
2 Order in Council, 12 September 1914, AWM 25, item 9/8, AWM.

resolve this confusion, 'Bridges insisted on working through Birdwood in all dealings with the base', and so, very early in the war, the latter was granted de facto status as administrative head of the AIF. It appears that Bridges also foresaw the time when the position of GOC AIF would be a purely administrative one and because he did not want to be taken from an active command, he abdicated most of his powers as administrative head of the AIF.[1]

To co-ordinate their administration with that of the British, both expeditionary forces had to establish a base depot. These corresponded to the British regimental depots which completed the training of reinforcements before sending them to the front, and also handled convalescents. Either they 'hardened' them to return to the front or they repatriated them home. In the case of the dominions, their depots would also co-ordinate the issue of ordnance and supplies from both Britain and the home dominion.

Bridges' original plan was to establish a depot in London, but the disembarkation of the AIF and its line of communication units in Egypt made him decide that it was imperative this be established there instead. On 8 January 1915 he informed the Department of Defence that the War Office had approved the establishment of this base because,

> The staff of this division is fully occupied in training and administering the troops and the need of an intermediate organization to conduct routine correspondence with the Department of Defence and the High Commissioner's Office, and to co-ordinate questions of pay and equipment affecting the separated components of the Australian Imperial Force, is urgent.[2]

Bridges established the base on 14 January 1915 and placed it under the command of his AA&QMG, Colonel Victor Sellheim, a regular soldier. Sellheim initially was pleased about the appointment until he realised that it precluded him from an active command. He and Bridges argued heatedly about the decision but Bridges would not alter it, although Bean claimed that he did promise to give Sellheim a brigade at a later date. Despite the urgings of Sellheim's friend Brudenell White, Sellheim was never granted

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1 White to Bean, 8 May 1924, Bean Papers, AWM 38, 3 DRL 606, item 255, AWM; C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume II* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1924), 394.

2 Bridges to Dept of Defence, 8 January 1915, B 539, item AIF 112/2/341, AA.

a brigade because Birdwood deemed him unsuitable for an active command. Instead, he remained in charge of the Base Depot in Egypt, and then London, until he was superseded in mid 1916.[1]

Much of the difficulties in Sellheim's task stemmed from Bridges' avoidance of virtually all responsibility for the administration of the AIF. He did this by referring all queries to Birdwood and Maxwell and by refusing to issue orders on administrative matters through 'AIF orders'. Now changes were simply brought to the notice of units through 'Notifications' or 'Instructions.' 'He even pointed out that Maxwell as "commander-in-chief in the field" could make, subject to confirmation in England, all promotions in the AIF.' While the careerist motives for this abrogation of routine administration seem obvious, and there may have been elements of a lack of familiarity with the demands of this level of command as well, it also suited Bridges' pro-Imperial stance to sacrifice national prerogatives while satisfying his own interests and inclinations.[2]

Sellheim's task was made even more difficult through the allocation of the smallest staff possible 'to enable the A.I.F. to be paid and administered.' To administer matters of ordnance, records, pay and finance as well as base details for a force of over 40,000 men, this staff consisted initially only of Sellheim, a batman and a staff clerk. It increased rapidly, however, after Birdwood issued an order that only questions of principle affecting the whole of the AIF should be referred to Bridges for his opinion and he was thus relieved of routine administration of the AIF other than for the 1st Division. All other matters were to be handled by Sellheim so Bridges could concentrate on preparing the AIF for battle.[3]

As Base Commander Sellheim had a very difficult job. Until the return from Gallipoli he handled the interests of both the Australians and the New Zealanders (who supplied two brigades to the ANZAC Corps), often with an under-sized and poorly trained staff. The quality of this staff was not improved by Bridges who posted to the base any officers he judged

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1 C.D. Coulthard-Clark, A *Heritage of Spirit: A Biography of Major-General Sir William Throsby Bridges K.C.B., C.M.G.* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1979), 137; Bean, *Official History Vol. II*, 394; Godley to Pearce, 10 January 1916, and Birdwood to Pearce, 29 January 1916, Bean Papers, AWM 38, 3 DRL 606, item 237, AWM.

2 Bean, *Official History Vol. II*, 394.

3 Ibid., 395; Order No. 5 issued by Birdwood, 15 January 1915, War Diary of Admin Staff Anzac Corps, AWM 4, item 1/28/2, AWM.

incompetent for active commands. Sellheim's command was not even centralised because suitable accommodation was scarce in Cairo and as a result, various sections of the base were scattered widely through the city. As he strove to overcome his difficulties, Sellheim received little help from Bridges who, when he left for Gallipoli, 'left the base to sort itself out' but despite this, his performance in the position was adequate and although there were many complaints about the administration of the AIF under his command, a number of senior officers later praised the job he performed under the difficult circumstances he had faced.[1]

When Bridges was fatally wounded on 15 May 1915 changes had to be made to the AIF's administrative organisation. General Sir Ian Hamilton, the General Officer Commanding the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (GOC MEF), wanted Birdwood to replace Bridges as GOC AIF but the Australian Government would not agree. Instead it appointed the Australian Chief of the General Staff, Colonel J.G. Legge, as both GOC AIF and commander of the 1st Division. Birdwood was appointed to act as GOC AIF only until such time as Legge arrived from Australia.[2]

Since Legge was personally unpopular with many pre-war Australian officers his appointment was resented greatly and Brigadier General J.W. McCay complained fruitlessly on the grounds that he was senior to Legge. Others appear to have indicated their willingness to resign over the appointment but none of this made the Government change its mind. Hamilton, inspired by the Australian complaints and his own 'knowledge of Legge's reputation in the Army in Australia', protested about this appointment himself. He later explained to Kitchener that Legge was;

> a man of brilliant mentality: could be the cleverest soldier in Australia. But he is regarded even in that wire-pulling country as a political (sic) and self-seeker, also he has a knack of quarrelling and writing.[3]

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1 Sellheim to Bean, 20 November 1923, 3 DRL 606, item 255, AWM; Bean, *Official History Vol. II,* 395; Monash to wife, 10 February 1915, Monash Papers, 1884, box 127, NLA; White to Bean, 8 May 1924, Bean Papers, AWM 38, 3 DRL 606, item 255, AWM; Maxwell to Munro-Ferguson, 21 January 1916, Novar Papers, 696, item 3580-1, NLA.

2 Bean, *Official History Vol. II,* 131.

3 C.D. Coulthard-Clark, *No Australian Need Apply: The Troubled Career of Lieutenant General Gordon Legge* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988), 98; McCay to GOC 1st Division (to be passed on to the Australian Government), 15 June 1915, AWM 25, item 789/4, AWM; Hamilton to Kitchener, 19 and 27 May 1915, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57, No. 61, PRO.

His protest had no effect either because the Australian Government indicated that it was too late to revoke the appointment. The original telegram sent to the British had given the War Office and the GOC the option of recommending another officer. Instead, the Army Council ratified the appointment and Legge was made GOC AIF.[1]

Pearce was quite aware that the decision would not be popular. He wrote to Birdwood in September pointing out that he was mindful of the criticisms of the appointment made by other Australian officers. This he put down to jealousy and implied that Legge had pushed for changes that were 'too revolutionary' for those officers who clung to old ideas, while adding that there had been more than one demand for Legge's service from the British Army Council. After Bridges' death, given 'the desirability of appointing an Australian officer to the command General Legge was the best available officer.' Pearce hoped that Legge would do well but stated that he now felt that he should have sought Birdwood's and Hamilton's opinion before making the appointment.[2]

In retrospect Pearce's emphasis on the need for an Australian to be promoted to command is significant. The desire to have their own nationals in the higher commands of their forces was to be a recurring theme in the relations of both the Australian and Canadian Governments with the British High Command throughout the war. As will be seen, both emphasised this increasingly as the war progressed and by 1918 there were few British officers left in the CEF and even fewer in the AIF.

Legge, a fierce patriot, was soon at loggerheads with the British. Birdwood asked him to inspect the Intermediate Base before he left Egypt for Gallipoli and he formed the opinion that Cairo was totally unacceptable as a centre for training. When he reported this directly to the Australian Government, Maxwell resented the fact that the report was not sent through him as GOC in Egypt, and Legge was censured over the matter on his arrival on Gallipoli. To Legge's great indignation, Pearce did not support him in a matter which he saw as an attack on the autonomy of the Australian command and he expressed his feelings over the issue in 1917:

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1 Munro-Ferguson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 29 May 1915, CO 616/24, PRO.
2 Pearce to Birdwood, 11 September 1915, 3 DRL 6673, item 67, AWM.

> When I first reached Gallipoli and they censured me for my telegram to the Minister from Egypt, I had hoped that the Minister would have stood up for me and insisted on the right of the senior Australian officer communicating with his government. Unless that were done I was barred from writing officially.[1]

Faced with this lack of support from his Minister, Legge, like Bridges before him, began to operate through Birdwood in administrative matters. When he did try to act independently over officer promotion, he was quashed. Officer casualties on Gallipoli had been very heavy and their replacement was urgent. Legge proposed that such promotions should come from the whole force rather than from within the brigades concerned. However, when Colonel John Monash, then commanding the 4th Brigade, complained bitterly to his immediate superior Godley, Legge was forced to abandon this idea despite the specific duties and powers of the GOC AIF which gave him control over promotions. Then, in July, he disagreed with both Hamilton and Birdwood over tactics and this seems to have increased British animosity towards him.[2]

The British now found an excuse to post Legge off the Peninsula. Colonel McCay, who had been appointed to command the newly formed 2nd Division training in Egypt, was injured and had to return to Australia, and on 23 July the British Army Council, without consulting the Australian Government, ordered Legge to Egypt to ready the division for eventual deployment to the front. Legge assumed that this transfer would be temporary and that he would soon be back in command of the 1st Division, but this did not happen. When he cabled the Defence Department informing it of the changes and asking if it intended sending another officer to relieve him of the command of the 2nd Division so that he might return to the 1st Division, it made it clear to him that he was to remain in Egypt and that the 1st Division would remain under the command of a British officer, Major General H. B. Walker.[3]

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1 Bean, *Official History Vol.II,* 423; Coulthard-Clark, *No Australian Need Apply,* 106 ; Legge to Department of Defence, 23 January 1917, Bean Papers, AWM 38, 3 DRL 606, item 255, AWM.

2 P.A. Pedersen, *Monash as Military Commander* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1985), 93; Coulthard-Clark, *No Australian Need Apply,* 109.

3 Coulthard-Clark, *No Australian Need Apply,* 107-110; Legge to Novar, 5 October 1915, Novar Papers, 696, item 3606, NLA.

Birdwood now offered to take over the role of administrative head of the AIF, claiming in a letter of 31 August to Munro-Ferguson (the Australian Governor-General) that Legge would have problems performing this function from Egypt. He stated that he had no personal feelings in the matter but that he put it forward 'in the general interest of the Commonwealth troops'. There is no reason why Legge would have had problems since much of the administration of the AIF at this time was centred in Cairo and Legge would have a chance to familiarise himself with this while he trained his division and then could return to Gallipoli at least as knowledgeable as Birdwood about the requirements of his task. Despite this, in mid September the Australian Government acceded to his proposal and arranged for the GOC's powers to be temporarily vested in Birdwood. It did not confirm him in the position formally until September 1916, but then it backdated the appointment to 18 September 1915. Although for a period he asked Legge for advice on any 'large question affecting our Australian troops as regards organisation and administration', Birdwood from this time remained undisputed administrative head of the AIF until he was promoted to command the Fifth Army in 1918.[1]

It is necessary to pass some judgement on Birdwood as an administrator, but this is made difficult by the lack of hard evidence of his role as the chief administrator of the AIF. What is certain is that, despite working long hours, he had little time to perform much more than an overseer's role in the practical administration of the AIF. To add to his onerous and time consuming duties as the tactical commander of a corps, Birdwood insisted on spending a great deal of his day visiting his troops and talking to them. Some, viewing this from a distance, believe that it was to the detriment of his function as commander. Their view was supported to some extent by Birdwood's operations officer, Brudenell White, who remarked that, in contrast to Bridges 'who watched everything', Birdwood 'wants to be out talking with the men'. Brigadier General R. A. Carruthers, the DA&QMG of the force for much of the war, however, explained that this desire did not detract from the administration of the AIF because Birdwood delegated to those he trusted, then left them alone and never 'worried about the details in the least degree'. In many ways, of course,

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1 Birdwood to Munro-Ferguson, 31 August 1915, Novar Papers, 696, items 3328-3482, NLA; Birdwood to Pearce, 8 November 1915, Bean Papers AWM 38, 3 DRL 606, item 237, AWM.

Birdwood's attitude seems more like that of a man more confident in his command than Bridges was.[1]

One of the key features of Birdwood's administrative style was the frequent, long 'round-robin letters' which he sent to a number of important officials from June 1915, especially the Defence Minister, the Governor-General of Australia and the Prime Minister of New Zealand. In these letters he explained his actions and thoughts on a variety of matters but, chiefly, he used them to praise the exploits of his troops and to explain his administrative actions. This idea of maintaining frequent contact with interested parties through multiple copies of letters he appears to have developed under Kitchener who used a similar method when in India. The letters were well received in Australia, and through them he developed a friendship with Sir George Pearce which was maintained long after the war. Certainly, Birdwood may have tried to use them to further his career, but they did help the Defence Minister to acquire a clear understanding of the actions of his GOC, and thus performed a valuable administrative function. He also used his constant exchange of letters with Godley to develop common policies in dealing with Australians and, especially, with matters of promotion.[2]

After Birdwood's appointment as GOC, the next important development in the structure of the higher Australian administration was the establishment of facilities in Britain. Bridges had envisaged a base depot in England as being essential for the AIF, but when the AIF was based in Egypt this idea was shelved. However, the heavy casualties at the beginning of the Gallipoli campaign led to a need for a formal organisation in Britain.

Australian wounded were transferred to Britain in increasing numbers (there were 12,000 in the country by the end of 1915), and it soon became apparent that a depot had to be developed to deal with them and their many problems. When the men arrived in Britain, some with virtually no clothing, they were scattered over the country to a variety of hospitals and in some cases were in the country for three weeks before the

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1 Haig Diary, entry 2 September 1916, WO 256/13, PRO; White to wife, 8 May 1916, White Papers, Melbourne; Carruthers to Bean, Bean diaries, AWM 38, 3 DRL 606, item 113, AWM.

2 Keith Murdoch to Hughes, 14 July 1917, Murdoch Papers, 2823, folder 33, NLA; Birdwood to Kitchener, 6 April 1915, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57, no 61, PRO.

High Commissioner was informed and could help them. This latter problem was exacerbated by British hospitals, which kept poor records of arrivals and discharges.[1]

The dispatch of Australian wounded to England led to an enormous number of family enquires from both Australia and Britain since most Australian soldiers appeared to have friends or relatives there. These enquires increased so rapidly that by July, the High Commissioner's office had employed an extra thirty-five typists to handle them. This increased work load and a lack of office space forced the High Commissioner's Office on 17 October 1915 to establish an office in the Wesleyan Training College located in Horseferry Road on the edge of slum areas in central London. This was to remain the location of the Australian Administrative Headquarters for the rest of the war, and in fact 'Horseferry Road' became synonymous with AIF Headquarters.[2]

As the wounded recovered, the work in Britain increased still further for the men now had to be re-trained and once more 'hardened' for combat. Clearly the supervision and training of the men could not be executed through the High Commissioner's office and so on 29 May 1915 a depot to hold 3,000 men was established under the command of Colonel Sir Newton Moore at Monte Video Camp near Weymouth on the coast south-west of London. Moore, an ex-Premier of Western Australia, had been the Agent-General for that state in London Immediately before the war. At the commencement of the Gallipoli campaign he began to pester the High Commissioner's office for any work of a military nature. When no-one could be spared from Egypt to command the depot, Lieutenant Colonel Percy Buckley, the Military Adviser to the High Commissioner, appointed Moore to the position. Although he had held the rank of colonel in the militia forces, Moore had little knowledge of modern warfare but Birdwood admitted that he ran the depots satisfactorily because of his common sense and force of character, both useful attributes in a base commander.[3]

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1 John Robertson, *Anzac and Empire: The Tragedy & Glory of Gallipoli* (Melbourne: Hamlyn, 1990), 208; Buckley to White, 1 July 1915, White Private Papers, Melbourne; Army Council Instruction No. 280, 4 February 1916, AWM 25, item 481/13, AWM;

2 Buckley to White, 1 July 1915, White Papers, Melbourne; High Commissioner's Report 1915, A 458/1, item F 108/8 Part 2, AA; AWM 13, 7009/6/6, AWM;

3 High Commissioner's Report 1915, A 458/1, item F 108/8 Part 2, AA; AWM 13, 7009/6/6, AWM; Buckley to White, 1 July 1915, White Papers, Melbourne; Monash to wife, 30 September 1916, Monash Papers, 1884, box 127, NLA; Birdwood to Munro-Ferguson, 30 October 1916, Birdwood papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 30, AWM.

After some refurbishing, Monte Video Camp provided suitable accommodation for the Anzac convalescents but it soon became overcrowded as wounded continued to flood into England. To remedy this, the New Zealanders were detached in January 1916 and further Australian camps were established at nearby Westham and Abbey Wood. At the same time Moore was promoted to brigadier-general in command of the Australian depots in the United Kingdom.[1]

Upon arrival at the depot, men were examined and classified 'A', fit for general service; 'B', unfit for general service but fit for light duty; 'C', fit for home service; and 'D', unfit for general service or home service. There were weekly examinations of those in categories 'B' and 'C' to see if they could be upgraded. This system became general for the whole British Army, and perhaps was an example of dominion methods being passed on to the Imperial forces, since Moore claimed that he was the originator of the system. The system became more important later when 'B' and 'C' class men were used in base positions to replace fit men in order to help alleviate critical manpower shortages at the front.[2]

In the camps, men were trained and hardened until a large draft was collected and sent back to the front. This could be a slow process because of a shortage of ships to transport troops to Egypt. As a result, camps became overcrowded and discipline problems developed among men not being under the control of their regular officers and being given excessive leave due to the accommodation problems. The transport situation worsened and in January 1916, there were 10,000 half-fit Australians in Britain facing a wait of six to seven months to get back to their units. The situation had deteriorated to such an extent that some officers began to talk of paying their own fares back to Egypt, but this was prohibited because it was believed that it would give richer officers advantages for promotion over others who could not afford the fare.[3]

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1 *Report on the Establishment and Administration of the Australian and NZ Training Depots in the United Kingdom, from 29th May 1915 until 31st May 1916,* Sir Newton Moore, AWM 25, item 99/16, AWM; War Office to Department of Defence, 28 January 1916, CO 616/47, PRO.

2 *Report on Training Depots* , Sir Newton Moore, AWM 25, item 99/16, AWM.

3 Ibid; Buckley to White, 27 January 1916, White Papers, Melbourne.

Meanwhile, back in Egypt, the over-worked administration was increasingly troubled by financial problems caused by the need to pay the British for goods and services supplied to the AIF during a period in which proper records had not been kept. By mid 1915, these had become so obvious that on 19 August the Australian Government announced that it needed to appoint a businessman to manage all money and supply matters in the AIF. The man appointed was Robert McCheyne Anderson who was described by the Prime Minister as 'exceptional', although he was aware that Anderson had major faults as well as virtues. Later, in a private conversation, Hughes described Anderson as 'a very capable business man, very pushing and very ambitious'. Hughes argued that, although Anderson had no military knowledge (although he had been a member of the militia for eight years, reaching the rank of captain), 'his capacity is unlimited' and so Hughes recommended him for the position. Hughes' judgement was proven correct and Anderson was responsible for a number of beneficial changes in the techniques and efficiency of the management of the AIF before his enemies, acquired by dint of his personality, led to his being superseded.[1]

Anderson was a businessman and former Treasurer and Town Clerk of the City of Sydney who had already held a number of government appointments. In February 1915 he had been a success as Finance and Business Adviser to the Minister of Defence and later led investigations into the business management of the Departments of Defence and Home Affairs and the PMG. From his correspondence, he also appears to have been on very friendly terms with the ex-Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, who was now High Commissioner in London. This all appeared an ideal background to enable him to solve the problems suffered in the early days of the administration of the AIF through lack of experienced men.[2]

Anderson's appointment was part of a reorganisation of the force aimed at increasing its general efficiency. There had been numerous complaints about administrative matters, mainly over the mail service and difficulties in quickly forwarding accurate information about casualties, but there were indications also that the financial arrangements of the AIF were

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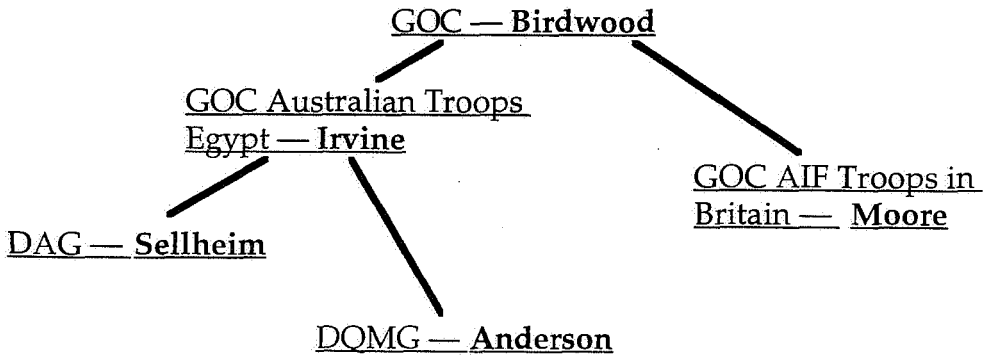
1 *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates* (*House of Representatives*), 52 (19 August 1915): 4943; Peter Charlton, *Pozieres, Australians on the Somme 1916* (Melbourne: Leo Cooper, 1986), 275-6; White to wife, 24 August 1916, White Papers, Melbourne.

2 Anderson to Fisher, 24 January 1916, Fisher Papers, 2919, series 1; items 193-194, NLA; Sellheim to Bean, 20 November 1923, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 255, AWM.

unsatisfactory. Pearce became dissatisfied with the running of the Intermediate Base which, he was informed, needed strong leadership, and that AIF headquarters in Egypt needed to be expanded and made more efficient since there would shortly be 40,000 Australians in the country.[1]

Because Pearce doubted Sellheim's ability to provide this strong leadership, he replaced him with the Australian Chief of the General Staff, Colonel G.G.H. Irving. At approximately the same time, he informed the Secretary of State for the Colonies that he was appointing an Australian officer as GOC Australian troops in Britain, to be responsible for the co-ordination of training, administration and organisation within Britain but under the command of the GOC AIF in Egypt. In Egypt Irving, now a brigadier general, would be GOC Australian Troops Egypt, with Sellheim as his DAG and the newly appointed Colonel Anderson as his DQMG. An advantage of this arrangement would be that Irving's new position would greatly improve matters because he would be the unquestioned representative of the Australian Government, the High Commissioner in England and of the AIF. Later, to avoid confusion of command, it was emphasised that Birdwood was the commander of all Australian troops in Egypt while Irving commanded 'Australian Details and Reinforcements in Egypt'.[2]

Australian Command November 1915



1 Anderson to Trumble, 29 March 1916, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 255, AWM. Keith Murdoch to Pearce, 13 September 1915, Pearce Papers, A 4719/1, item 1-50, 9, AA; Bean, *Official History Vol. III*, 146.

2 Pearce to Novar, 25 November 1915, Pearce Papers, A4719, bundles 1-2, AA; Department of Defence to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24 November 1915, and 8 December 1915, AWM 224, Mss 562, AWM; Bean, *Official History Vol. III*, 145-7

As this reorganisation was being set in motion, Sellheim was fighting against British attempts to carve off sections of the Australian base depot. In November, as part of a reorganisation of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (MEF), the British tried to take over control of both the Australian Records and Inquiry section and the Australian ordnance organisation. Sellheim fought against these moves on the basis that they would damage Australian interests. He argued that all British officers stuck together and only saw 'in their Australian confreres more a chance for their own advancement and preferment than the opportunity to arm, clothe and equip them satisfactorily'. They gave British units the best of the equipment and, if someone did not raise a voice on behalf of Australia, 'our troops would get the leavings'. He also argued that the records section had to be independent because it was needed to co-ordinate information between the AIF, the Australian Government and the British Government, while the ordnance section had to be independent because the AIF had different mobilisation tables from the British, and so needed to co-ordinate supplies of goods which came from both Australia and Britain. In the face of these arguments and the fact that the base had grown considerably (it now employed 575 men) and was still growing, the British abandoned their attempts to take over any section of the base and Australia thus maintained a degree of administrative autonomy.[1]

Having had some success in overcoming British interference, Sellheim was shocked on 27 January 1916 when Irving arrived unannounced to supersede him. Sellheim had heard rumours of Irving's appointment but Melbourne had not replied to his inquiries on the subject nor had he been informed of it by Godley, who had taken over as GOC AIF for a period while Birdwood was acting as GOC MEF. Godley was in favour of the change, as he believed Sellheim was incapable of managing the administration of a large force, although he told Pearce that he would find another job for Sellheim as he 'had done well'.[2]

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1 Sellheim to Major General C.F. Ellison, 30 November 1915, AWM 25, item 99/5, AWM. Sellheim to Dept of Defence and GOC Levant Base, 9 December 1915, B 539, item 264/1/204, AA. 'Establishment of the AIF Intermediate Base', 30 December 1915, AWM 25, item 99/4, AWM.

2 Sellheim to Bean, 20 November 1923, Bean Papers, AWM 38, 3 DRL 6673, item 67, AWM; Godley to Carruthers, 9 December 1915, Godley Papers, WA 252/6, NZNA. Godley to Birdwood, 25 May 1916, Godley Papers, WA 252/10, NZNA; Godley to Pearce, 10 January 1916, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 6673, item 67, AWM.

Irving's arrival was a great disappointment to Sellheim, especially since Irving had been junior to him, and he fought this plan to 'dispossess' him. When Irving arrived in Egypt, Sellheim refused to hand over command without instructions from Sir John Maxwell, who was away from Cairo at the time. A deadlock existed for a few days until a conference could be held between Maxwell, Birdwood, Sellheim and Irving. The result was a compromise which protected Sellheim's position.[1]

Birdwood was impressed with Sellheim's work (possibly influenced by White who was on very friendly terms with him), and wanted to retain him. He told Pearce that Sellheim had done 'wonderfully good work' under difficult circumstances and that he had a high opinion of him, even if his stammer and obesity did preclude him from being given a fighting command as both he and White wished. Birdwood also was sympathetic towards Sellheim's feelings of humiliation and so proposed a compromise. He wrote that Irving was 'rather too good to be left not doing very much' and appointed him to command the 14th Brigade. He appointed Sellheim commander of AIF Headquarters, and recommended that he be promoted to brigadier general as a reward for his past services. In the face of this decision, and given the compliments paid to Sellheim by Birdwood, Maxwell, Godley and others, the Australian Government agreed to Birdwood's plan and Sellheim remained in charge of the administration with Anderson as his immediate subordinate.[2]

Anderson arrived in Egypt on 27 January and wrote the first of his many dispatches to the Department of Defence only six days later. Regular reports were a feature of his administration, and some of this and other mail caused him problems. He had a unique writing style when he was irate concerning which Birdwood commented to Munro-Ferguson that

> The letters written to Australia by Anderson are certainly of a most extraordinary nature, and when I saw him I told him that if they were written to me as Defence Minister I should have him out of his appointment within the next five minutes! His only reply was "Of course you would, but I feel I am here to write the way I do!" He certainly is a most curious character and in conversation strikes me

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1 Anderson to Dept. of Defence, 29 March 1916, Anderson Papers, PR 83/20, AWM; Sellheim to Bean, 20 November 1923, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 255, AWM.

2 Birdwood to Pearce, 29 January 1916, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 237, AWM.

> as being very independent, though I am told that he is not really when tackled.[1]

This aspect of Anderson's correspondence had been noticed already by the Governor-General. He had written to Pearce that 'it is gratifying to note how well Birdwood and Anderson combine in action, tho' their literary styles are so dissimilar'. Indeed there could be few things further apart than Birdwood's extremely tactful style and the manner in which Anderson attacked those who had annoyed him.[2]

Anderson's function in the base was to introduce business methods because the Minister and the Government were 'dissatisfied with the conduct of their business affairs here, conducted entirely by British soldiers'. He understood that Australia was trying to gain control over its administration of ordnance, supplies and accommodation and that it was his job to do this. In this he was aided by a small group of experienced businessmen and one of his first actions was to give a number of them commissions so they had the necessary authority to introduce the many improvements in the running of Australian affairs that their expertise told them were needed. They included R.M. Gowing, 'head of a big concern' in manufacturing and merchandising in Australia, who became the DADOS of the AIF, and G. Sherington, Chairman of the Manufacturers' Association in New South Wales, whom Anderson found as a bombardier in the artillery in Egypt. None of these new administrators had military experience before the war; Anderson tended to look outside the army to get the experts he needed to ensure that his organisation ran smoothly.[3]

Another new appointment was Major T.W. Jolliffe whom the Government appointed as the Auditor of the AIF. He was needed desperately as a recent audit had revealed that there were a great many arrears and work not completed in the accounts of the force. For example, not a single ledger in the department had been balanced and there was no system of regular audits, something which led to both the commander of the department and his deputy being returned to Australia. Because one of his duties was to settle the AIF's accounts with the British, Anderson was

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1 Birdwood to Munro-Ferguson, 4 April 1917, Pearce Papers A 4719, bundle 1, folders 1-2, AA.

2 Munro-Ferguson to Pearce, 24 March 1917, Pearce Papers A 4719, bundle 1, folders 1-2. AA.

3 Anderson to Sellheim, 22 April 1916, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 255, AWM; Sellheim to Bean, 20 November 1923, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 255, AWM; Anderson to Dept of Defence, 5 April 1917, AWM 10, item 4310/14/14, AWM.

anxious to eliminate this type of careless book-keeping, not least to avoid problems similar to those which the states had experienced in settling accounts with the British after the Boer War.[1]

While these reforms were still being instituted, the main section of the Administrative Headquarters was transferred to Horseferry Road when the bulk of the AIF moved to France. The British tried to use this as a reason for replacing Birdwood as administrative head of the AIF. The ambitious Birdwood reacted strongly and fought with great vigour against this attack on one of his power bases, having just instituted a massive reorganisation of the AIF which he saw as the chance to form an Australian Army under his own command. He first mentioned this idea in December 1915 and continued to promote it for most of the following year. Initially he was supported strongly by Sir Archibald Murray, the GOC Egypt, but when the idea was rejected by the CIGS, Sir William Robertson (because the British wanted 'something more flexible than an army') Murray turned against the idea while the War Office instead tried to remove Birdwood from his administrative command.[2]

For a variety of reasons, the British considered it would be more efficient if Murray was to take over as administrative head of the AIF. Murray favoured the idea because, amongst other things, it would ensure that Australia would send its reinforcements to Egypt for final training and Murray wanted them there as a reserve defensive force. Others believed that with Birdwood as GOC AIF, Godley's position as commander of II ANZAC Corps and the NZEF would be made awkward since Birdwood would exercise command over the Australian component of that corps. It is also clear that some element of personal feelings came into the opposition to Birdwood; there is little doubt that a group of influential figures in the British Army disliked him. This lead Murdoch to tell Hughes that Birdwood's 'numerous enemies' were in the vanguard of the opposition to this idea in order to 'reduce [or], if possible, efface Birdwood's command'.

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1 Memorandum for DAAG Administrative Headquarters AIF from Lieutenant Colonel G.J. Hogben, 21 May 1918, AWM 224, Mss 578, AWM; Anderson to Dept of Defence, 2 November 1916, Anderson Papers, PR 83/20, AWM. Lieutenant Colonel W. Williams, *Audit Section AIF Formation, Growth and Duties,* AWM 224, Mss 578, AWM; Anderson to Pearce 10 February 1916, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 255, AWM.

2 Birdwood to Kitchener, 12 December 1915, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57, no. 64, PRO; GOC MEF to CIGS, 21 January 1916, CO 616/63, PRO; Robertson to Murray, 26 January 1916, Murray Papers, IWM.

Birdwood later blamed this opposition on his association with Kitchener and the Australians and on the fact that he was an Indian Army officer. This may be true but, as became obvious at this time, some animosity was inspired by his ambitious nature. Murray reflected this when he wrote to Robertson that 'underlying the whole thing is [Birdwood's] strong personal motive which you will easily see through.'[1]

Birdwood informed Pearce in January that suggestions had been made that Birdwood should be removed as administrative head of the AIF when he took two divisions to France and left two in Egypt, since he could not control two groups in two different places. He disagreed with this and argued that it would be best to leave him in his present role, with a headquarters in London as a central base. This would ensure continuity in the system of control and would cause no more problems than when he was at the Dardanelles and the base was in Egypt. He continued that placing Murray in charge of the administration would have the same result except that Murray would not be in France where the bulk of the work would be done. This would be especially so when the other two divisions came to France, and were (hopefully) formed into one army. He argued that this was needed as the formation of four Australian and one New Zealand divisions into two separate corps caused him to need two staffs, one to administer his corps and the other for the AIF.[2]

In March his problems intensified as the War Office made greater efforts to remove him as administrative head of the AIF. Between them, the CIGS, Robertson, and Murray tried to force Birdwood to choose between being the administrative head of the AIF or a corps commander in France. They continued to argue that Birdwood's move to France made it impossible for him to fulfil his statutory function as administrative head of the AIF and so tried once again to transfer this function to Murray. Birdwood again rejected the idea. He insisted that he could perform both as an operational corps commander and as administrative head of the AIF by delegating sufficient power to both the AIF headquarters in London and to

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1 Major General Sir Arthur Lynden-Bell to Brigadier General F.B. Maurice (DMO, War Office), 7 March 1916, Lynden-Bell Papers, IWM ; Lynden-Bell to Maurice, 21 March 1916, Lynden-Bell Papers, IWM; Murdoch to Hughes, 3 DRL 2925, AWM; Birdwood to Munro-Ferguson, 14 February 1917, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 30, AWM; Murray to Robertson, 26 March 1916, Murray Papers, IWM.

2 Birdwood to Pearce, 29 January 1916, Pearce Papers, A 4719, item 63, volume 12, AA; Birdwood to Pearce, 20 February 1916, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 26(b), AWM.

his divisional generals. He also argued that a separate officer in charge of the administrative command would never be seen as anything other than subordinate to the general commanding the troops in the field. Clearly he believed that this could lead to difficulties of precedence in matters that might arise which concerned both. These points did not carry weight with Robertson and Murray, however, and they continued to try to take over the administration of the AIF.[1]

Birdwood now used other tactics. He enlisted the aid of the Australian Government, telling of his suggested delegation of powers and asking them to support him at the War Office. He then journeyed to London to argue in person against the proposed changes. Here he gained the support of Hughes who was now in England, and tried to convince the British that the ties of Empire were under threat in the AIF.[2]

It is clear that he intended to argue that his position was necessary to preserve the 'imperial' feeling in the AIF by combating the growing attitude of independence which he had discerned and deplored. He defined this attitude in the following terms:

> 'During this war we do everything possible to meet the wishes of the War Office without demur or objection of any sort, but in the next war in which we fight alongside of England, it will be as an ally and not as a subordinate.'

Birdwood probably expressed an attitude commonly held in higher military and government circles in Britain when he continued that; 'this is of course the very spirit which we do not want to see.'[3]

Major General Sir A.L. Lynden-Bell, chief-of-staff to General Sir Charles C. Monro, Hamilton's successor as GOC MEF also believed that Birdwood was motivated by personal aggrandisement and would try to achieve his ambitions with the aid of Billy Hughes. He was probably correct since Hughes now fought hard to retain Birdwood as GOC AIF and even to be the commander of an Australasian Army. He had interviews with both Robertson in March and later with Haig in June where he argued

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1 Robertson to Murray, March 1916 AWM 45, item 30/2, AWM; Birdwood to General Lynden-Bell, 14 March 1916, AWM 45, item 30/2, AWM.

2 Birdwood to Defence, 30 March 1916, B 539, item AIF 264/1/224, AA; Chief Egyptforce to Chief, London, 25 March 1916, AWM 45, item 30/2, AWM.

3 Birdwood to Colonel C Wigram, 26 March 1916, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 39, AWM.

Birdwood's case; more strongly with Robertson than Haig, but well enough to win his point.[1]

Eventually the question was thrashed out in a meeting held in April, without firm results. Birdwood's position remained secure, forcing the British to argue that, like the Canadians, the AIF needed one officer in England who would be answerable to the War Office. Moore and Sellheim were suggested, and as a last resort Birdwood even considered giving the position to Brudenell White, but this suggestion was scotched by Andrew Fisher who insisted that the Australian Corps had to retain an Australian as its chief staff officer. Here is a clear example of the burgeoning nationalism identified in the introduction. There was no practical reason for Fisher's insistence on an Australian for the position; rather, it was a symbol of Australia's growing sense of a need to give some expression to a separate identity. This sense of nationalism was to grow more intense as the war continued.[2]

The meeting having failed to settle the matter fully, the War Office cabled Australia in May to emphasise that Birdwood needed the help of an officer in England to carry out administrative work and to liaise with the War Office and the Commander-in-Chief in France. It suggested that Sellheim was this man, not knowing that he was soon to be superseded by Anderson. The question continued to drag out into June and July when Godley brought II ANZAC Corps to France. The suggestion was now made that Birdwood should delegate some of his powers (especially powers of promotion) to Godley and to Chauvel as senior Australian officer in the Middle East. In July, on Birdwood's advice, Pearce rejected this suggestion and decided that he would allow Birdwood to retain sole control over administration. At this time too, Hughes met with Haig who decided against forming an Australasian Army but ended any suggestion that the administration of the AIF should be taken from Birdwood. This, then,

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1 Lynden-Bell to Maurice, 27 March and 4 April 1916, Lynden-Bell Papers, IWM; Lord Hankey, *The Supreme Command 1914-1918 Volume 2* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1961), 501; Haig Diaries, entry 1 June 1916, and 22 June, 256/10, PRO.

2 Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 255, AWM; Birdwood to White, 21 April 1916, White Papers, Melbourne. Birdwood to Munro-Ferguson, 3 May 1916, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 30, AWM.

remained the situation for the rest of the war despite renewed efforts in 1918 to depose Birdwood as GOC AIF.[1]

As Birdwood was fighting his personal battle in England in 1916, Sellheim in Egypt was fighting another which impinged more directly on the independence of the Australian command. The Australian Government had indicated that it wanted Australian troops to be trained by Australians, and Birdwood had instituted the Australian Training Centre to carry out this important task. This under-staffed body trained reinforcements as they arrived from Australia, and the 4th and 5th Divisions, formed in Egypt in their entirety. Murray, however, had no intention of leaving training under the control of the Australians.

At Murray's suggestion, on 12 April Robertson ordered Sellheim to transfer all Australian training to a British organisation possessing an adequate staff under the command of a major general. Sellheim objected, stating that this was contrary to the wishes of the Australian Government. His protests were futile, and Australians trained under British command until the training depots were transferred to England in May 1916, ahead of the 4th and 5th Divisions.

Australian Headquarters was also transferred to London that month, the advance party arriving there on 22 May and this led Birdwood to discuss with Hughes the new command structure that was now needed in Britain. They decided to place Sellheim in charge of Australian troops in Britain, with Moore under his command as GOC AIF Depots. Anderson was appointed commandant of the administrative headquarters in Horseferry Road. This was against Birdwood's wishes since he considered that a lack of a military background would stand against Anderson in his dealings with the War Office, but in this he was over-ruled by Hughes.[2]

This structure soon changed, however, because Hughes wanted a businessman to handle the negotiations with the British over the manner in which Australia would pay for material and services supplied to the AIF and Anderson was the logical choice. Hughes had a high opinion of him as

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1 Birdwood to Pearce, 14 July 1916, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 26(b), AWM; Hughes to Haig, 16 June 1916; Haig to Hughes 25 June 1916; Haig to The Secretary War Office, 13 July 1916, AWM 27, item A197, AWM;

2 Birdwood to Fisher, 7 July 1916, Fisher Papers, 2919, folder 1, item 205-208, NLA.

a business manager, as we have seen, and he was also influenced by Fisher who pushed for Anderson to be appointed to supervise Commonwealth financial affairs. Finally, Hughes was heavily prejudiced against Sellheim by Keith Murdoch, who had been very unimpressed with the work Sellheim was doing in Egypt when he met him there in September 1915. The result was that Sellheim was superseded as from 1 August and returned to Australia. This, in turn, led to further problems with the higher administrative structure in Britain.[1]

At this time Anderson, with the rank of colonel, was in charge of Horseferry Road and Brigadier-General Moore was in charge of the depots where the 3rd Division was training prior to leaving for France. Birdwood had intended that Monash would be the senior Australian officer in England, 'to look after our interests in general' — especially at Salisbury Plain where the training depots were located. This, however, caused problems since Moore and the War Office were both under the impression that Moore was GOC AIF in England. When Moore, acting under this impression, tried to exercise some authority over both the 3rd Division at Salisbury and over Anderson in London he was instantly opposed by Anderson who informed him that each was independent under Birdwood and that Anderson was to be the conduit between Moore and the War Office. The resulting dispute had to be settled finally through the intervention of White, who travelled to London to chair a conference which settled it along the lines identified by Anderson.[2]

Anderson and Moore remained in their respective positions until they were replaced separately in early 1917. As will be detailed below, Moore was replaced in April 1917 to provide a position in Britain for Major General McCay. Anderson, having largely finished his reorganisation of the administration and completed the negotiations with the British over the costs of the AIF, was replaced on 21 May 1917, by which time he had made himself unpopular with a number of important figures in Europe and Australia, not the least through his biting letters to the Department of

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1 Fisher to Pearce, 11 August 1916, A 458/1, item F 108/8 part 3, AA; Bean, *Official History Vol. III*, 172; Robertson, *Anzac and Empire*, 155.

2 Birdwood to Pearce, 11 March 1916, Pearce Papers, A 4719, item 63, vol 12, AA; Anderson to Moore, 9 August 1916, Fisher Papers, 2919, folder 1, item 228, NLA; White to Monash, 4 August 1916, Monash Papers, 1884, box 124, folder 921, NLA.

Defence. For example, in March 1916 he informed the Department of Defence that he was very busy, adding that

> [I am] very glad to do it, but I am not going to have my mind worried and distracted by petty interference from people who I regret to say, from any evidence before me, are not sufficiently competent to direct or assist me.

When this letter was returned as being 'offensive', he replied that he felt that he had been very restrained. On another occasion, he wrote to the Department,

> May I again point out the unwisdom of your attempting to direct us in matters of detail at this end? Order us to do what you will, leaving the details to us, and if we fail, sack us.

In the end Anderson was not sacked, probably because much of what he wrote was sensible, but the Department must have been pleased to see him leave.[1]

Anderson made far more serious enemies elsewhere, and these did have the ability to have him returned to Australia. He does not appear to have been popular with senior officers. They may have found him amusing social company, but equally clearly they found his obvious ambition for promotion and decorations irritating and wanted a man with greater military knowledge in charge of the AIF headquarters. A 'vehement nationalist', it is also possible that he had irritated Birdwood by his forthright defence of Australian rights. It is easy to see, therefore, why Birdwood and White had been 'trying for some time to engineer him out' of his position before he left London.[2]

Anderson's greatest error was to get on the wrong side of that great hater, Billy Hughes. By aiding a political enemy of Hughes at the time of the first conscription referendum, Anderson made a serious error, and Hughes developed a great enmity towards Anderson. This was first expressed in May when the British knighted Anderson without prior reference to Australia. Hughes was furious, both because Anderson was given an award

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1 Anderson to Department of Defence, 29 March 1916, 3 DRL 606, item 255, AWM; Anderson to Department of Defence, 7 September 1916, Anderson Papers, PR 83/20, AWM.

2 White to wife, 23 September 1916, White Papers Melbourne; Bean Diaries, 1 December 1916, p 47, AWM 38, 3 DRL 606, item 67, AWM; Monash to White, 22 August 1916, White Papers, Melbourne; A.J. Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse: A Biography of General Sir Harry Chauvel G.C.M.G., K.C.B.* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1978), 110; White to wife, 9 May 1917, White Papers, Melbourne.

and because it was given without reference to him. However, although he tried hard, he was not able to get the British to rescind it and he had to be content with seeing Anderson returned home shortly afterwards having completed his most important work, the regulation of the AIF's debts to the British Government.[1]

While he had been in charge of the London office, Anderson had been responsible for a number of important innovations which set the style in the headquarters for the rest of the war. Most importantly, he introduced sound business practices and kept a close watch on costs. As an example of this, he introduced a system of internal audit which ended the financial problems that had occurred in Egypt. He also paid close attention to economising spending and the use of labour. As an example of the latter, he was instrumental at headquarters in hiring women to replace 'A' class men wherever possible. He argued that women worked as well as men and were much cheaper, even though hiring women led to some increased costs. This was most noticeable later in the war when the competition for skilled clerical staff forced the AIF to pay higher wages as well as providing better conditions such as rest rooms and cheap afternoon teas ('because the ladies, as you know, very much appreciate their cup of afternoon tea'). Even so, using women saved money because women's wages were 30 shillings a week compared to the £4/14/6 that would have been paid to an AIF corporal in London. This represented a great monetary saving since by 1918 the office was employing over 3,000 women. The hire of women also conserved manpower and enabled more men to be sent to the front when the AIF began to suffer from shortages of soldiers later in the war. As a result, in 1918 there were only 527 'A' class men employed in the headquarters, and most of these were specialists in the medical or pay branches.[2]

After Anderson left London, there were no real changes in the basic structure of the Australian administration in Britain. There were changes in personnel at all levels but the system remained the one that had been established in 1916. In contrast to the Canadian system for much of 1916, it was efficient, both in its use of manpower (Anderson claimed that in

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1 Hughes to Murdoch 3 September 1917, Murdoch Papers, 2823, folder 33, NLA.

2 Anderson to Department of Defence, 11 August 1916, MP 539/1, item AIF 112/6/39, AA; 'Special History of the Civilian Personnel Administrative Headquarters London', AWM 224, Mss 585, AWM; Hansard 12 June 1918, cited in AWM 27, item A196, AWM.

November 1916 the Canadians were using 1,500, mainly 'A' class, men in their finance section compared to the AIF's 316, of whom many were 'B' class), and in the smoothness of its operation. Bean's statement, that 'Birdwood's administration was actually carried out in a large measure by White and at a later stage by Colonel Dodds', presented with no supporting evidence, ignores the contribution of Anderson, whom Bean disliked, and gives too much emphasis to the latter's friends, White and Dodds, and is belied by the evidence.[1]

Colonel T.H. Dodds, a regular soldier and formerly the Adjutant General in Australia, was appointed as commandant in London in October 1918. He succeeded Colonel T. Griffiths (a regular soldier who had served much of 1916 as military secretary to Birdwood in France), the latter having succeeded Anderson in April 1917. Dodds evidently did a competent job, but he commanded an established organisation very late in the war, in which most of the major problems had been solved. In contrast, Anderson produced the system which simplified Birdwood's role. He established proper business practices in the management of the headquarters, employed many of the better administrators, established a system which ensured that a minimum of 'A' class men were kept in England and, as will be seen, helped develop the system which simplified the AIF's payment for British supplies. All of this was carried out, it appears, with little help from Birdwood, let alone White. Anderson far better described his attitudes and accounted for a large part of his success when he wrote that he was 'a servant of Australia running a difficult job, determined to uphold to the best of my ability Australia's interests'.[2]

The longest serving administrator in Britain was Brigadier General Sir Newton Moore. He commanded the Australian Base Depot from 1915 until he was replaced in early 1917 to provide a position for Major General Sir J. W. McCay. In December 1916, Birdwood used the pretext of ill-health to relieve McCay of his command of the Fifth Division. As Bean rightly points out, using ill-health as an excuse to relieve incompetent officers is a dangerous ploy. When they are adjudged fit again for command, they will intrigue and use any influence they have rather than accept their supersession. This was the case with the influential but quarrelsome McCay.

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1 Anderson to Department of Defence, 2 November 1916, Anderson Papers, PR 83/20, AWM; Bean, *Official History Vol. III*, 187.

2 Anderson to the Dept of Defence, 11 January 1917, B 539, item AIF 112/6/69, AA.

Once it seemed certain that he would not be sent back to France, he began to agitate to be placed in command of all Australian troops in Britain.[1]

Birdwood (amongst others) was most unhappy with this suggestion. Using what appears to have been a favourite phrase, he informed the Governor-General that McCay, who had failed as a divisional commander, would be 'the fifth wheel for the coach' and that he was not liked by Anderson and Moore and so, presumably, would cause problems. Although Pearce wanted McCay in charge of Australian depots in England, Birdwood argued against it because of McCay's health, and because 'he is too old a man with a rather curious temperament.' What Birdwood was referring to here was McCay's very irritable manner which led him to question the orders of his superiors, complain if he felt that he had been overlooked for promotion and generally behave in a very argumentative manner. Birdwood was also happy with Moore because, having little knowledge of military matters, he always consulted Birdwood before major decisions. Birdwood had no illusions that things would remain the same under the headstrong McCay.[2]

Despite Birdwood's objections, Pearce appointed McCay to replace Moore in late March because he knew there were no jobs for McCay in Australia and he clearly did not want this former defence minister unemployed at home, where he would have enormous potential to cause problems for the Government. There is also some indication that political considerations contributed to Moore's supersession; Hughes' confidant, Murdoch, commented to Birdwood that the Australian Government did not want this 'pensioned off politician' to 'rise on the backs of our soldiers.' This attitude would have been intensified when troops in the depots were not given an electioneering manifesto from Hughes before they voted in the first conscription plebiscite. Anderson had blamed Moore for this failure, and Hughes was determined to get rid of him. The measure of the unpopularity of McCay's appointment can be gauged from Murdoch's comment to Hughes that McCay

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1 Bean, *Official History Vol. IV*, 24.

2 Birdwood to Munro-Ferguson, 31 December 1916, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, AWM; Birdwood to Pearce, 24 January 1917, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 26 (b), AWM; Birdwood to Munro-Ferguson, 12 October 1915, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 30, AWM; Birdwood to Munro-Ferguson, 29 January 1917, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 30, AWM.

> is unscrupulous, hated throughout the AIF, and is already in hot water in Salisbury. McCay has been a blight on the AIF. You could not believe how the officers and men distrust and detest him.

Despite this, McCay retained his position.[1]

McCay was not content to be isolated in the relative backwaters of the depots, and he tried again for promotion when Anderson was replaced. Pearce was aware that McCay would cause problems, and wrote to Birdwood that he wanted Griffiths to be given every chance free from problems caused by McCay. Pearce's worry was proven correct. Shortly after being appointed, Griffiths offered to be demoted because of the difficulties caused by McCay. Amongst other things, McCay continued to urge that he should be placed in charge of all Australians in Britain, an idea Birdwood opposed because it would 'lead to constant friction.' Birdwood eventually had a discussion with McCay, after which he considered that he had headed off further problems. This was a little optimistic, and McCay made several more attempts to gain the position of GOC AIF in Britain. He began his new campaign in March 1918 by pushing to be appointed as a lieutenant general in charge of both administration and training. He probably surmised that Birdwood was shortly to be promoted out of the AIF, and Birdwood considered that the prospect of his leaving delighted McCay who would then try to become GOC AIF. Birdwood believed that this elevation would be a mistake since he could 'hear of no senior officers in the force who have a good word for him'. Birdwood was correct in his supposition because McCay did make unsuccessful attempts to take Birdwood's position after his promotion to lead the Fifth Army in May 1918, and again aimed to be GOC AIF when Griffiths returned to Australia in August 1918. McCay, though, was simply too unpopular with a large number of generals and politicians and these attempts also were doomed to fail.[2]

In May 1918, Birdwood was promoted out of the Australian Corps to command the British Fifth Army. At this stage a cabal led by the journalists

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1 Pearce to Birdwood, 2 February, 1917, Pearce Papers, A 4719, vol 12, AA; Murdoch to Birdwood, 8 April 1917, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, items 27-28, AWM; Bean Diaries, 28 April 1917, page 13, 3 DRL 606, item 77, AWM; Murdoch to Hughes, 14 July 1917, Murdoch Papers, 2823, folder 33, NLA.

2 Pearce to Birdwood, 27 August 1917, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 25, AWM; Birdwood to Pearce, 8 December 1917, Pearce Papers, A 4719, item 63, vol 12, AA; Birdwood to Pearce, 12 March 1918, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 237, AWM; Pearce to W.A. Watt (Acting Prime Minister) 28 August 1918, Pearce Papers, A 4719, vol 12, AA.

Bean and Murdoch tried to prevent Sir John Monash from being promoted to replace Birdwood. Ultimately they were unsuccessful, but as part of their campaign they proposed that Birdwood should no longer retain the position of GOC AIF and that it should be given to Monash. In the months that followed, Hughes came to accept the view that Birdwood's retention of the position was not in the best interests of Australia and so tried to remove him.

In describing the attempts to prevent Monash from being preferred over White to command the Australian Corps, Bean's biographer refers to the 'selfless honesty of his purposes' but a close reading of his diaries quickly suggests a personal animosity towards Monash, together with frequent examples of the anti-Semitism common in those who attended English public schools in the late nineteenth century. Monash himself had no doubt about part of the motivation for the attack, noting that it was a 'nuisance to fight a pogrom of this nature'.[1]

Bean secured the influential help of Keith Murdoch, who seems to have been motivated more by an anti-Birdwood bias than anything else. This was probably influenced by his strong nationalistic feelings, which led him to believe that Birdwood would place British interests ahead of Australian interests and out of pique, because Birdwood had refused to provide him with accommodation at GHQ when he had wanted to come to France in April. Murdoch's was an important voice because he was able to bring influence to bear on Hughes and Hughes certainly began to push actively for the removal of Birdwood as GOC AIF after he had confirmed Monash as corps commander. To many of the military leaders whom his group tried to influence, Murdoch appeared to be the leader and, as a result, Bean was able to talk freely with men who were railing against Murdoch while not realising that Bean was the real head of the cabal.[2]

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1 Dudley McCarthy, *Gallipoli to the Somme: the Story of C.E.W. Bean* (Sydney: John Ferguson, 1983), 332; For example of anti-Monash comments; diary entries, 15 June 1918, 18 June 1918, Bean Diaries, AWM 38, 3 DRL 606, item 115, AWM; anti-Semitism; diary entries 16 May 1918, Bean Diaries, AWM 38, 3 DRL 606, item 113, AWM; Monash to wife, 25 June 1918, Monash Papers, 1884, box 127, NLA

2 Birdwood to Munro Ferguson, 10 July 1918, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 34, AWM. Murdoch to Hughes, Hughes Papers, 1538, item 19/80, NLA; Murdoch to Birdwood, 8 April 1918, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, items 27-28, AWM

In the event, the would-be king makers were shown to have less power and influence than they thought and their efforts were rejected almost universally by senior military officers. In the face of this unified support for Monash (including from White), Hughes had no option but to confirm him as corps commander, especially after he had won his brilliant victory at Hamel on 4 July. Nevertheless, Hughes no longer wanted Birdwood as GOC AIF.[1]

No doubt influenced by Murdoch, Hughes had begun to believe that Birdwood would not protect Australian interests, especially now that he was in a British command of some importance. Murdoch argued that Birdwood had not done a complete job as GOC AIF, especially in the manner in which he neglected both Chauvel's Middle East command (which Birdwood never visited) and the training depots on Salisbury Plain, which he had briefly visited only twice in the last year. He argued also that the Australian troops wanted an Australian to command them.[2]

Birdwood tried to counter these sentiments, arguing that he had fought for Australian interests successfully and also that he would have time to be both GOC AIF and commander of the Fifth Army. In supporting the latter statement, he gave some idea of his administrative style. As an army commander he had more time to devote to the administration of the AIF. This was because in India he had learnt from Kitchener 'how absolutely essential it was to decentralise work in high command'. Following this policy he had given 'greatest possible powers to every divisional-general — GOC of our troops in England, and the Administrative Commander in London.' They handled most matters 'only referring to me in matters of principle, and when in any difficulty'. Given the size of the organisation he headed, his approach was the only sensible one.[3]

In the face of Hughes' attack on his position, Birdwood emphasised that his army command was only temporary in the hope that Hughes would not use it to displace him as GOC AIF but this was to no avail. When Hughes found that Birdwood had been confirmed in the position, he wrote

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1 Hobbs to Pearce, 27 June 1918, Bean Papers, AWM 38, 3 DRL 606, item 237, AWM; Dodds to Pearce, 29 May 1918, Pearce Papers, A 4719, Bundle 13, B8, NLA

2 Murdoch to Hughes, Hughes Papers, 1538, item 19/80, NLA.

3 Birdwood to Pearce, 23 August 1918, A4719, item 12, AA.

to his cabinet colleagues and demanded that he be allowed to displace Birdwood. Echoing Murdoch's sentiments, he informed Australia that Birdwood,

> looks to the War Office for his orders, for preferment, for maintenance of his position. Where interests of Australia and Britain clash — and they do clash and have clashed in military matters is certain and interests Australia have suffered (sic) — for which will he stand.[1]

Hughes precipitated matters by giving Birdwood a choice. He could retain his Army command or remain GOC AIF, but he could not do both. Birdwood replied that he had accepted the Fifth Army because he was persuaded that by remaining in command of the Australian Corps he was standing in the way of the promotion of an Australian officer. However, he would now approach Haig and obtain his views on the correct decision to make.[2]

The solution that Birdwood and GHQ came up with must have been a shock to Hughes for they comprehensively outmanoeuvred him. Birdwood accepted Hughes' offer and resigned from his army command. Haig, however, asked the Australians to lend him to the Fifth Army until the end of November. This date was chosen as it was expected that then

> things would probably be a good deal more settled either by our defeating the Boche or by weather possibly putting a stop to much fighting for the time being.

Hughes was forced to accept this decision although he was not happy about it, and Birdwood remained GOC AIF until the end of the war.[3]

One great problem for Birdwood in this role was his relations with the AIF stationed in the Middle East. Its organisation was under the command of Birdwood but under the supervision of Lieutenant General Sir Harry Chauvel (as he was in 1918). This arrangement was plagued with difficulties because Chauvel was not allowed to deal directly with the Australian Government and had limited authority.

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1 Birdwood to Hughes, 18 June 1918, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 16, AWM; Hughes to Pearce [n.d.], Pearce Papers, A4719, folders 1-4, bundle 3, AA.

2 Birdwood to Hughes, 15 August 1918, Pearce Papers, 3 DRL 2222, bundle 3, AWM.

3 H.A. Lawrence to Birdwood, 23 August, 1918, Pearce Papers, 3 DRL 2222, bundle 3, AWM; Birdwood to Colonel C. Wigram, 6 November 1918, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 39, AWM; Birdwood to Munro Ferguson, 28 October 1918, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 34, AWM.

Chauvel found the problems of isolation, and restrictions on his ability to make staff appointments 'irksome.' He was expected to fit into the British command system while still maintaining close relations with Birdwood in France. Alec Hill correctly points out that Birdwood was less than fair to Chauvel because he never took the trouble to visit Egypt. Thus Chauvel and his troops were made to feel less important and isolated and there are indications that they were treated less equally than the rest of the AIF in questions of leave and decorations. It is difficult to judge if these complaints are justified because of the destruction of papers as was mentioned in the introduction but it is clear that they were important ones for the troops. There is no doubt that this is one of the real areas of failure of the administration of the AIF despite Chauvel complimenting Birdwood by stating that serving two masters in this manner 'would have been impossible had one of them been anyone but Birdwood.'[1]

The final change to the higher organisation of the administration of the AIF came after the Armistice. Birdwood was retained as GOC AIF, but Monash was brought back to England to oversee its demobilisation. This is treated in greater detail in Chapter 9, so suffice it to say here that Birdwood's duties were largely ceremonial while Monash, aided by the Minister of Defence (who had arrived in Britain for this purpose), was charged with the onerous duty of returning the Australian troops home. This he did with great distinction, with both the AIF and the staff at Horseferry Road repatriated quickly and peacefully.

Any assessment of the work of Horseferry Road must come to the conclusion that it performed a difficult task remarkably efficiently. Although Desmond Morton claims that, 'Any military base will be regarded with contempt by fighting soldiers' and that the 'ANZACs regarded the "bodgers [bludgers?] in Horseferry Road" with all the contempt Canadians reserved for Argyll House' (Canadian Headquarters in Britain) in practice it is hard to find evidence for this. What references there are to Horseferry Road refer mainly to the services it provided for the soldiers on leave and give few criticisms. Perhaps the reason that Canadian Headquarters attracted more criticism is that, in contrast to Horseferry Road, Argyll House was

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1 Hill, *Chauvel*, 72-3.

crowded with semi-employed officers and that it employed far more fit troops, to the resentment of those who had come on leave from the front.[1]

One great exception to the lack of open criticism came in Federal Parliament in 1918 when an embittered returned soldier, D. C. McGrath, mounted a savage attack on Horseferry Road. He was an MP when he enlisted in the AIF at the age of 44, and he served (in a postal unit) in Britain and France for a time before returning to Australia. In Britain his dignity was offended by being treated like a soldier, rather than a MP, when his commanding officer refused him permission to express complaints about the organisation of the AIF directly to the High Commissioner, Andrew Fisher, a political friend.

After he returned to Australia and was once more serving in Parliament, he became a bitter opponent of the new coalition government formed by Hughes after the split in the Labour Party. Clearly embittered by his experiences in England, he took several opportunities to attack the AIF's organisation in that country. On one occasion he complained that the headquarters was giving bad service to the troops and that the largely non-combatant officers serving there found it a comfortable source of promotion and medals, a common criticism of all headquarters.

The information supplied by Horseferry Road to answer these charges shows the manner in which the headquarters had managed to make itself both efficient in terms of officers and men employed and that it was not a safe haven for those trying to gain rewards without danger. In October 1918 there were 1,880 men employed there. These were made up of 527 'A' class men, 348 'B' class and 1,005 'C' class men. Working alongside them were 3,049 female employees. Included on the staff were 130 officers of whom only fourteen had not seen active service, all with good reason. Only thirteen decorations had been issued to these officers since they joined the headquarters, compared to forty-one awarded to them before they had joined it. Fifty of these officers were permanently unfit for active service.

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1 Desmond Morton, '"Junior but Sovereign Allies": The Transformation of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, VIII: 1 (October 1979), 59; Desmond Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics: Canada's Overseas Ministry in the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 208; I am grateful for a discussion with Ron Gilchrist at the time, Curator of Private Records in the Australian War Memorial on this point.

Clearly this evidence does not support the premise that Horseferry Road was staffed with fit men living a life of ease while others suffered for them.[1]

When we try to assess the performance of the organisation of AIF headquarters, we must conclude that it did develop into an efficient organisation. It did suffer from personality clashes, but that is to be expected in an organisation made up of such diverse characters operating under a reasonable degree of stress. There is nothing to lead us to disagree with the central theme of this thesis that the administration of the AIF was very efficient at the end of the war. In the next chapter we will see that the Canadians had a much more difficult task in attaining the same degree of efficiency.

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1 AWM 27, item A 196, AWM; Staffing at Horseferry Road, October 1918, AWM 11, item 1506/4/23, AWM.

Chapter 3

Canadian Organisation

This thesis will not describe in detail the workings of the Canadian administration — Desmond Morton has done that well; what it will do is give a sufficient outline of the history of this organisation to compare it with the administration of the AIF. The Canadians faced similar situations to the Australians, but reacted to them differently at times, and at other times chose similar ways to meet them. We need to understand these reactions and to see how they often mirrored the dominions' different perspective on imperial relations.[1]

Like the Australians, the Canadians developed their administration in an *ad hoc* manner. As in the Australian case, part of this was due to the Canadians having no clear idea at the outset that they would have to administer their own force. Like Bridges and White, the Chief of the Canadian General Staff, Major General Sir Willoughby Gwatkin, a British regular officer, had believed that 'the far larger British army would provide all the administrative support and management that was necessary', but this did not happen. The British Army grew quickly to a size far larger than had ever been envisaged and there were few trained British administrators to spare. This, and the demands of Canadian nationalists, forced Canada to assume the responsibility for its own military administration.[2]

The most obvious features of the Canadian administration were the initially confused command system and resultant poor administration, the formation of a Ministry of the Canadian Government in Britain and the large numbers of Canadians (especially officers) who were employed in Britain. These factors all contrasted with the Australian system and arose out of peculiarly Canadian reactions to the war.

Two men dominated the early administration of the CEF. The first was Lieutenant General Sir Sam Hughes, the Minister of Militia, whose individualistic nature led him to make decisions that caused the CEF many problems. The second was the Honourable George Perley, the Minister

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1 Morton, A *Peculiar Kind of Politics: Canada's Overseas Ministry in the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982).
2 Ibid., 35.

Without Portfolio in Borden's government, who had been sent to Britain in mid 1914 as the acting Canadian High Commissioner. Previously a largely symbolic office, this increased in importance under the influential Perley and through it he was able to mitigate some of the more troublesome of Hughes' decisions.[1]

Early in the war, the AIF had established a clear chain of command from the Intermediate Base Commander back through the Minister of Defence to the government. In contrast to this, the early Canadian system was chaotic. A poor administrator himself, and gradually losing influence in Cabinet and parliament, Hughes established an administration in Britain in which 'to enhance his authority, . . . [he] promoted confusion'. Eventually this administration was overthrown at the instigation of Perley (who shared a mutual animosity with Hughes) and by the British, who objected to Hughes' rabid (and sometimes irrational) nationalism, his inconsistent policies and the inefficiency of the system that he had established.[2]

Hughes had an active dislike of professional soldiers, a dislike that was returned by a wide-ranging group that included the Governor General of Canada, the Duke of Connaught, who was a field marshal in the British Army, Major General Gwatkin and various lower ranked permanent soldiers. Connaught illustrated the depth of feeling of such men when he wrote that Hughes was 'an impossible man to deal with, . . . he really is an ignorant and conceited demagogue'. Clearly Hughes reciprocated the intensity of feeling of the professional soldiers and his reaction was to reject their experience and to appoint political cronies to administrative commands. In doing so he created confusion by sending them to England with poorly defined duties and conflicting ideas of their function and no clearly defined role. While they fought for power, the Canadian administration suffered.[3]

The first of these political appointments was John Carson, a prosperous businessman and prominent member of the militia whom Hughes sent with an advanced guard of administrators to prepare for the

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1 Ibid., 26.

2 Morton, *Canada and War*, 66-67; Ronald G Haycock, *Sam Hughes: The Public Career of a Controversial Canadian, 1885-1916* (Ottawa: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1986), 259.

3 Connaught to Kitchener, 19 August 1914, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57, no. 56, PRO.

arrival of the CEF in Britain. Here he expanded his vaguely defined role to incorporate as wide a mandate as he could grasp. His first action was to inspect the Salisbury camp and to report to Kitchener that conditions there were totally unsatisfactory. However, the GOC of the CEF, Major General Alderson and his senior officers denied this and as a result Kitchener subsequently refused Carson any further interviews. Since his position was now untenable, Carson returned to Canada where he railed against the British administration in general and Alderson in particular. This quickly brought him into dispute with Perley, whom Ottawa had apprised of Carson's recommendations but who had a different attitude to the situation. Carson sought to legitimise his position in Britain and requested that Ottawa appoint him Perley's deputy and give him authority to act in Borden's name in Britain. Borden in turn rejected this, and instead directed Hughes to give Carson a clearer idea of his duties and powers.[1]

Although Borden had ordered him to clarify the situation in Britain, Hughes appointed Carson to another vaguely defined position, this time in connection with supplies and other requirements for the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Carson promoted this position into one of great personal power. Acting as the Minister's personal representative, and equally as protective of Canadian national aspirations as Hughes, Carson used his power to ensure that Canadians were placed in senior command positions in the division. He fought with some ability, and in the first few months in Britain he was able to secure the appointments of Canadians as CRA and CRE (Commander, Royal Artillery and Commander, Royal Engineers) of the 1st Division, although this was against the expressed wishes of the British GHQ.[2]

Another of Hughes' appointments in Britain soon clashed with Carson. The original camp commandant at Salisbury was Colonel Victor Williams, who had led the first contingent to Britain. When he managed a posting to France, a Canadian regular officer, Colonel J. C. MacDougall, was promoted to brigadier general and given command of the camp at Salisbury. Here he was placed in charge of all Canadians in Britain while supervising the training of the CEF in the country. The potential power this position gave MacDougall did not appeal to Carson, who angled to win promotion to

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1 Borden to Carson, 21 January 1915, Borden Papers, reel C 4238, pp. 22817-30, NAC; Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics*. 31-33.

2 Ibid., 33, 46.

major general to oversee MacDougall's position. In this he was unsuccessful and Hughes emphatically told both Carson and MacDougall that the latter was in command in Britain. However, Carson's position as Hughes' representative was not defined and he lost little time in convincing MacDougall that the latter should deal with the British and communicate with Canada through Carson.[1]

Another figure entered the already complicated picture when the 2nd Division arrived from Canada in May 1915. Hughes had appointed as its commanding officer, Sam Steele, a political crony from Canada's west. The inexperienced 66 year old Steele, however, was totally unacceptable to the British as a divisional commander, and Hughes had to find him another position. The British solved the problem by appointing him to the command of the Shorncliffe area. This was a British appointment, but as a Canadian major general Steele claimed to command all Canadians in Britain, and Hughes supported him in this although it clearly conflicted with MacDougall's position. Seizing upon the confusion, Carson now claimed to have been made the absolute military authority in England by Hughes. Carson told Steele that the latter was superior to MacDougall but that they both should address matters through him as Hughes' direct representative. He informed Steele that this was because he, as the Minister's representative, 'naturally [had] very extended powers.'[2]

Hughes now complicated the situation even more with a further appointment. When the 1st Division was posted to the front, Hughes attempted to gain some say at GHQ by sending another political ally, J. J. Carrick, to France as 'Official Recorder, Canadians'. His position, typically, was undefined and he used it to act as Hughes' personal agent at GHQ, where he and Perley antagonised each other and fell to bickering. Finally, Borden ended the bickering by sacking Carrick in August 1915, by which time much of his function had been taken over by a far more powerful figure, Max Aitken.[3]

Max Aitken (afterwards Lord Beaverbrook) was appointed to take charge of Canadian records on 6 January 1915. A wealthy newspaper owner,

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1 Haycock, *Sam Hughes*, 185, 266-7; Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics*, 36-8.
2 Ibid., 38-42; Haycock, *Sam Hughes*, 267; Carson to Steele 27 August 1915, RG 9 III A1, vol 74, file 10-8-22, vol 1, NAC.
3 Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics*, 46-7; Haycock, *Sam Hughes*, 266-7.

a British MP and a very close friend of the Canadian-born Colonial Secretary, Andrew Bonar Law, Aitken wanted this position to further his own British political career, although he was still aggressive in fighting for what he viewed as Canadian rights. In France he acted as a source of information for Hughes and as a conduit into GHQ. Here his influence with both the CEF and the BEF was so great that he played a large part in the dismissal of Major General Alderson in May 1916. He did not restrict himself to France, and his frequent intervention in matters in Britain led Carson to fear for his position. Aitken's meddling in this manner has a slight parallel with the Australian situation where Keith Murdoch, while acting as W.M. Hughes' personal envoy, tried to interfere with the running of the AIF — albeit not as successfully as Aitken. This was because Murdoch did not have Aitken's power, he was not well connected with British politicians, he had no military rank (unlike Aitken who was an honorary colonel), he was not especially popular in Australian military circles, and he was not able to exploit a command structure as chaotic as the Canadian one.[1]

The reasons that the politicians in Canada and (to a lesser extent) Australia appointed personal envoys are clear. Both colonies were well isolated from the battlefront in a time when communications were relatively cumbersome. Telegrams were used extensively but these did not allow the flexibility of telephone links, let alone television 'hook-ups'. Because of this, the politician who wanted to maintain control at his fingertips had to travel to Britain, or use personal envoys who give him strong and private support. This way he could influence matters and save himself from the worst of pressure from his electorate. Of course, Billy Hughes found that spending large amounts of time out of Australia laid him open to other attacks and to losing contact with the mood of the electorate; and this probably led to his using wrong tactics to try to get the conscription plebiscites passed.[2] Sam Hughes tried the other method of relying on personal envoys, with the added refinement of dividing their power so that each had to refer to him for judgement. The theory seems to have been that in this way he kept power by sowing confusion.

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1 Minute of the Canadian Privy Council 6 January 1915, CO 616/19, PRO; Bonar-Law to Borden, 5 June 1915, Bonar Law Papers, box 50, folder 1, House of Lords' Record Office; Haycock, *Sam Hughes*, 262-3; Aitken to Hughes, 26 April 1916, Borden Papers, reel C 4229, pp. 14955-57, NAC; Haig Diaries, entry 23 April 1916, 256/9 PRO; Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics*, 73.

2 Joan Beaumont, *Australia's War 1914 - 1918* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1995), 49.

The state of affairs in the CEF clearly could not continue and Borden was so informed by Gwatkin and the Deputy Minister of Militia and Defence, Sir Eugene Fiset, who wrote a scathing memorandum describing the training command in Britain as having 'no cohesion, no unity of control [and] no central authority properly constituted'. Carson was condemned for exceeding his duties with the result that there was 'friction, misunderstanding, extravagance'. This, and other complaints, prompted Borden to demand that Sam Hughes act to clear up the confused line of command. Hughes had already conceived the idea of a committee to administer the CEF, but before he could get his slightly improved organisation operating, he was dismissed as Minister of Militia. There were few in the CEF who mourned his passing. As one of his appointees worded it:

> There is a new contentment among us all. We walk with sprightlier step . . . clear eyes . . . cleaner cut. The Mad Mullah of Canada has been deposed. The Canadian Baron Munchausen will be to less effect . . . The greatest soldier since Napoleon has gone to his gassy Elba, and the greatest stumbling block to the successful termination of the war has been removed. Joy, Oh Joy![1]

That the British did not campaign actively to have Hughes removed or at least to bring some order into his administrative system is perhaps an indication that the British did not have a strong intention to form an Imperial Army. There were more than enough anti-Hughes feelings in Canada and France and they had enough information about his anti-British attitudes and his methods for them to realise the problems he was causing. For example, the Canadian Governor General wrote to Kitchener in May 1915 informing him that Hughes was

> carefully fanning the flame here against anything English and especially about the English Army, whom he abhors, on account of their honesty, gentlemanly behaviour and good discipline.

But, despite constant complaints of this kind, the British made no attempt to exercise any control over the CEF in Britain. Despite their desire to develop an Imperial Army, the British, no doubt, realised that this would have been an intolerable interference in the domestic affairs of a sovereign

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1 J.C. Creelman, quoted in Stephen Harris, 'From Subordinate to Ally: The Canadian Corps and National Autonomy, 1914-1918', *Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire*, No. 51 (1982), 125.

state. It is also another indication that the British did not try to manipulate the dominion forces to narrowly British ends. Certainly they tried to influence their policies along lines that best suited Britain, but as these lines usually best suited the dominions as well, the British had some success in their efforts. So, the British, while disliking efforts by radical nationalist such as Sam Hughes to express anti-British sentiments, they did not move to have them excluded from power. It was left to Borden and Perley to find a workable solution.[1]

For some time Perley had been suggesting that the position of High Commissioner was of such importance during the war that it should be converted into a cabinet portfolio. His ideas were supported by the Minister of Finance, Sir Thomas White, who urged the appointment of a cabinet minister to serve in Britain especially to control finances. On a visit home to Canada in the late summer of 1916, Perley convinced Borden that this would produce a more efficient organisation and it would help Borden minimise Hughes' increasingly embarrassing influence.[2]

As it turned out, the new organisation, the Ministry of Overseas Military Forces of Canada (OMFC), achieved this and more besides, because it also resulted in Borden ridding himself of Hughes as Minister of Militia. After Borden informed Hughes of the formation of the new organisation, the latter forced a series of stormy scenes that culminated in his sending Borden several heated letters. These finally drove the long-suffering Prime Minister to ask Hughes for his resignation on 9 November 1916.[3]

Perley now completely changed the Canadian organisations in Europe. Charged with controlling finances and increasing the efficiency of a force that would number 256,000 by 1 November, he worked quickly. He rejected the services of Carson and MacDougall, who were both returned to Canada. Aitken now immersed himself in British politics, preferring power in this far bigger arena and so left his position as Canadian representative at British GHQ in France in January 1917. Turning to the control of training, Perley had Major General R.E.W. Turner transferred from France where he

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1 Connaught to Kitchener, 31 May 1915, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57, no. 56, PRO; Morton, 'Junior but Sovereign Allies,' 59.

2 White to Borden, 6 October 1916, Borden papers, reel C 4314, page 35805, NAC; Morton 'Junior but Sovereign Allies,' 60; Haycock, *Sam Hughes*, 302.

3 Haycock, *Sam Hughes*, 306-8.

had commanded the 2nd Division. This had the dual purpose of ensuring that the most senior Canadian general was placed in command in Britain and removed from France a divisional commander who had not been especially successful, just as Australia had when, for the same reasons, it appointed McCay to command training in Britain.[1]

In some ways, Perley's arrangements were more efficient that those of the AIF. Now there was a clear and unambiguous chain of command, and all of it Canadian except for the Corps Commander in France (since May 1916 Lieutenant General Sir Julian Byng). There was no conflict between the chief administrator and the commander of the training depots as there was in the AIF because one was a Minister of the Crown while the other was a senior military officer and GOC CEF in Britain. At the same time, there was no one to challenge Turner's authority because at no time in Britain did any Canadian equal him in rank. This situation contrasts with that of the AIF where McCay continually tried to usurp the authority of, and created difficulties for, the GOC AIF in Britain, who always held a lower rank than McCay. Thus, the Canadians had started off with a situation which was inferior to that of the Australians, but now ended up with one that was, in some respects, superior to that of the AIF.

While he was making these changes, Perley was advised by the War Office that he could increase the efficiency of his administration by visiting Horseferry Road and learning from the Australian experience. Here he examined the Australian systems, especially the greater efficiency of the AIF headquarters in employing a far smaller number of men, especially 'A' class men, than the CEF. Anderson was impressed with Perley who was much easier to deal with than Hughes; the latter's 'form of seeking advice was a sonorous address on the virtues of Canada in general and the Canadian Army as personified in its Minister for Militia in particular'. Perley was most interested in the manner in which the AIF headquarters was organised and the systems it used, especially in the pay, ordnance enquiry and records sections. There is no evidence that Perley learned much from this visit since, although the Canadian organisation showed some

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1 Borden to Connaught, 22 September 1916, Borden Papers, reel C 4314, page 35801-2, NAC; Perley to Borden, 28 November 1916, Perley Papers, MG 27 II D 12, vol 7, NAC; Borden to Prime Minister's Office Ottawa, 5 March 1917, Borden Papers, reel C 4314, page 35387, NAC; Perley to War Office, 25 January 1917, RG 9 III, A2, vol 354, NAC; Perley to Turner, 24 November 1916, Perley Papers, MG 27 II, D 12, vol 7, NAC.

improvements, in many ways it retained established Canadian practices, especially in the manner in which it used officers and men. Part of the reason for this, of course, was that the Canadian situation was quite different in certain essential areas from that of the AIF.[1]

Unlike Australia, Canada had large numbers of soldiers in both Britain and France who were not members of the expeditionary force, while there were also many surplus, but influential, officers in Britain. In October 1914, since service railways behind the lines were becoming more important and knowing that they had great expertise in railway construction, Canada had offered to provide the British with trained railway workers. This offer was accepted gratefully and by the end of the war there were 15,000 men employed in the Corps of Canadian Railway Troops. To these supernumerary soldiers had been added the Canadian Forestry Corps which in 1918 was employing 10,000 trained timber cutters in Britain and over 12,000 in France. The administration of this force, which was not strictly a military one, demanded separate sections in the OMFC to manage these 'semi-civilians' and this had no parallel in the Australian situation. As will be seen later, for much of the war the CEF in Britain was burdened as well with a number of unemployed but politically influential officers. These men had not served at the front, were often disgruntled about this, and had the potential to make life difficult for a military commander through threats of political pressure, although Perley, as a cabinet minister, had sufficient standing to avert much of this.[2]

Certainly, after the OMFC was formed he did make efforts to reduce the numbers of spare officers in Britain and to release 'A' class men for service at the front. In February 1917 the Adjutant General reported that he was now reducing the numbers of both of these, the positions vacated in the headquarters being filled by 'B' and 'C' class men. Officers were given the option of returning to Canada or serving at the front after taking a reduction in rank.[3]

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1 Anderson to Dept. of Defence, 30 November 1916, MP 367, file 543/1/2, AA.

2 'The Growth and Control of the Overseas Military Forces of Canada', RG 24, vol 1824, file GAO 5-42, NAC.

3 'Report Adjutant-General's Branch Canadian Overseas Military Forces', MG 30 E 46, vol 3, folio 18, NAC.

The new administration established by Perley performed the same functions as Horseferry Road, but in addition the CEF maintained a representative at GHQ whereas Australia seemed to believe that this was unnecessary. The other great difference was that even after trying to reduce officer numbers in Britain, the Canadians maintained a larger number of officers with higher rank in England than did Australia. As an example, in March 1917 the Canadians in England employed 64 officers (29 above the rank of major), a cabinet minister and a deputy minister in their headquarters and 107 officers (34 above the rank of major) in their training commands. This compares to the Australian totals of 26 (8 above major) and 28 (15 above major) respectively. The Canadians, probably had to deal with more men, and certainly a more diverse group of men, than the AIF but much of the difference came from the need for the Canadians to employ officers who had brought to Britain contingents they had recruited but who could not themselves be employed in France.[1]

In late 1917, the Canadians demanded from the British a greater degree of control over their forces and their administration. While admitting that they had to place their fighting forces under the British for operational purposes, they demanded

> that in future all questions relating to the appointments (including to staffs and commissions), promotions, transfers, exchanges, recalls and the demands for officers affecting the Canadian Forces in the Field, pass from the senior officer of the Canadian formation concerned direct to the Canadian Representative G.H.Q. for transmission to the Minister, O.M.F.C. for his consideration, and not pass through the higher British commands with which the Canadian formations are serving.

In other words, all decisions from the Minister would pass directly to the Canadian formation concerned. They further demanded that he be consulted on all matters of policy and administration.[2]

In January 1918 the British called a conference at which they agreed to the Canadian proposals in principle, but wanted Haig (who was not at the conference) to give an opinion. He, in turn, asked for another conference but this was delayed by the German March offensive. It was held finally on 2

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1 'Composition of the Headquarters of the Overseas Dominions in the British Isles 1917', WO 33/814, PRO.

2 Acting Deputy Minister OMFC to War Office, November 1917, WO 32/5139, PRO.

April (without Haig) and the British put up few objections to the Canadian proposals. Haig, through his Deputy Director of Operations, wanted to ensure that there would be no interference with his right to allot reinforcements where they were needed, and the Canadians agreed that he could do this in an emergency, although they stressed that normally they allocated reinforcements on a territorial basis. The Deputy Director of Operations was also anxious that Haig should be consulted on the matter of senior appointments, and again the Canadians agreed. Finally there were agreements in other matters: British officers in the CEF would not be replaced without consultation and recommendations for awards and decorations would be sent through GHQ. The matter was settled finally when Haig was reassured on 16 April that the Canadians did not want to interfere with discipline or military operations.[1]

The nature and evolution of Canadian higher administrative arrangements is important because, in 1918, the Canadians were fighting for rights that Australia largely had been exercising since 1915. It took the Canadians some time, but finally they were able to eliminate the bickering and confused command structure from their force to enable it to operate efficiently. Also like the Australians, the Canadians managed at the same time to form an arrangement with the British to supply the necessities for their troops and to pay for them.

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1 Haig to Cubitt, 10 January 1918; Minutes of Conference, 2 April 1918; Cubitt to Haig, 16 April 1918, WO 32/5139, PRO.

Chapter 4

Capitation

One of the great issues between the dominion governments and the home government was the question of the former paying for their participation in the war. Both dominions had been quick to offer troops, and both had agreed to pay for all costs of these, except for accommodation and hospital treatment which the British provided free, but neither had imagined the scale of the war, the astronomical costs they soon accumulated nor the difficulties they found in trying to calculate the costs involved. In its turn the British government, no doubt, saw this readily assumed financial and human burden as part of the price the dominions had to pay for their belonging to an imperial army. While realising this, the British were still willing to be accommodating in their dealings with these dominions and, although they seized advantages were they could by bargaining individually with each government, they still made concessions whenever the dominion objected to the British charges.

Expecting a short war, both dominions had entered into their commitment readily but without any concept of the costs that would be involved. They could not rely on the experience of the Boer War. During that war most of the costs of the 'Australian' commitment (which was almost entirely provided by the individual colonies) had been borne by the British Government. The remainder was paid by the states. Canada, on the other hand, had simply paid for the cost of transport to South Africa and the 'difference between British and Canadian rates of pay'.[1]

British and dominion treasury departments in the early period of the war had to come up with a new method of calculating how and what to charge for services the British provided. On 14 December 1914 the War Office wrote to the Treasury that the British Government would not charge for housing the contingents nor for their land transport. It also suggested that it would

> not be practicable to earmark stores or supplies issued to the several contingents out of Army stocks, and in any case the Army Council

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[1] B. B. Cubitt to Secretary of the Treasury, 24 December 1914, CO 616/45, PRO; Morton, 'Junior but Sovereign Allies', 58.

are of the opinion that it is not desirable to make a claim on the Dominion Governments on this account.[1]

A further letter informed the Canadians that in addition, there would be no charge for treatment in military hospitals, a concession which was maintained throughout the war, with the dominions only paying the cost of rations. The British attitude of granting concessions to the dominions, which again reflected a belief in a short war, changed quickly.[2]

Before the change in attitude, however, the British made one further major concession. This arose out of Canadian complaints about the quality of their accommodation on Salisbury Plain. Because there were serious deficiencies in this accommodation, the British decided of their own volition not to charge for it. Clearly wishing to treat all contingents alike, the British informed the Australians shortly afterwards that they also would not be charged for accommodation or the fittings or supplies for it. This is an indication either of the very reasonable manner in which the British were prepared to accept a loss rather than overcharge the dominions or that at this time they simply saw the dominion contingents as like the British for most purposes.[3]

When they informed the Canadians of this arrangement the British added a sting for they went against what they seemed to have promised in December, and now indicated that they would be charging for goods supplied to the contingent. In the same letter, for the first time, the suggestion was made that the costs of the stocks issued in the field 'could only be allocated on an estimated basis' because of the difficulty in calculating them exactly. Clearly the British were coming to see that the war was not going to end quickly, and that they could not afford necessarily to discount expenses of this nature in such an open-handed manner.[4]

In an effort to clarify that a debt was owed, and to define that debt, the same suggestion was made regarding the Australian contingents in a letter of 5 March 1915. This urged that the Australian Government should give a clear indication of the expenses it would accept as its own, stressing that

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1 B.B.Cubitt to Secretary of the Treasury, 24 December 1914, CO 616/45, PRO

2 B.B. Cubitt to Canadian Government, 9 December 1914, RG 9 III A1, vol 3, 2-2-21C, NAC.

3 War Office to GOC Egypt, 10 February 1915, A 571/1, item 1920/9284, AA (note that this valuable file has subsequently been destroyed by the Australian Archives in Canberra); draft letter to the Duke of Connaught, 5 February, 1915, CO 616/45, PRO.

4 War Office to Duke of Connaught, February 1916, RG 9 III A1, vol 3, 2-2-21B, NAC.

these should include any pensions that would have to be paid. On 22 April the Australian Government in its turn accepted both that it was willing to meet the costs of its force and that part of these should be calculated on an estimated basis, although neither party had indicated at this stage how this would be done.[1]

While the AIF was training in Egypt, there should have been no problems in determining the costs of the force. Goods could be indented from the British as needed and an account sent to Australia for them. Cash for wages, purchase of forage and so on was advanced by the Imperial Command Paymaster, who forwarded the account via the War Office to the Australian High Commissioner in London, but once the troops moved to Gallipoli, this system was no longer possible. Control over the issue of supplies at the front was difficult because goods were issued or taken as needed and few receipts were asked for or given. Other supplies were destroyed, before or after being formally issued to the Australians, and in some cases so was the paperwork. The accounting in this period became so confused that it was later decided that the only method which could be used was to levy on the AIF a fixed charge per man at the front each day, and so the so-called 'capitation system' (sometimes 'per capita system') was imposed.[2]

It was not until August 1915 that the British indicated to the dominions that they proposed to recover their expenses in the field through this method. The War Office informed them that it intended to charge an average rate per head of troops in the field, and asked to be supplied with strength returns for men involved in the fighting on a weekly or monthly basis. Here the poor clerical work of the early days of the AIF proved to be a problem, and there were considerable difficulties in obtaining this figure. In addition, the Australian Government was confused about the actual basis for the figure the Australians would be charged by the British, although they assumed that it would be based upon the number of troops present on Gallipoli at any time.[3]

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1 Secretary of State for the Colonies to Munro-Ferguson, 5 March 1915, and Fisher to Munro-Ferguson, 22 April 1915, A 1608/1, item X16/10/2, AA.

2 Anderson to Dept. of Defence, 30 November 1916, Anderson Papers, PR 83/20, AWM; Anderson to Dept. of Defence, 15 May 1917, MP 367, file 470/8/590, AA.

3 B.B. Cubitt to High Commissioner, 23 August 1915, AWM 27, item A 76, AWM; Defence Dept. Paper, AIF 170/1/271, October 1915, A571/1, item 1920/9284, AA; Munro Ferguson to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 November 1915, CO 616/32, PRO.

Some months before this the New Zealand Government, in conjunction with the British, had suggested the simple capitation system be used to calculate costs. In a letter of 12 June 1915 they accepted that they were liable for all costs of their troops and suggested that the charge for supplies and stores issued in the field 'should be made in the form of a subsidy on the number of troops supplied, based on the average cost of maintaining a soldier in the field exclusive of pay'.[1]

It was partly because it was aware that this suggestion had been made but were confused about it, and because it knew that there were problems in the accounting of the AIF, that the Australian Government had sent Anderson to Egypt. It was not long before he too proposed the capitation system as the best method of calculating costs. It is not certain if this thought was spontaneous or, more likely, the result of suggestions from the British, but he saw its advantages, since it was a fair system which would be easily understood by all and which could be settled before the end of the war. Australia would not then be faced with the great troubles that some of the states had experienced after the Boer War in arriving at a financial settlement with Britain.

Anderson probably did not realise it, but in some ways his task was made a little easier because of personal discussions in Britain between the War Office and the Canadian commanders in Britain, even though these were confused by the complexity of the Canadian command structure. After 'a good many conversations' an agreement was reached on the basis of the British suggestion that they would calculate an average number of Canadians in France per day and then charge the Canadians a figure averaged out as the cost of keeping a man in the field per day — the 'capitation rate'.[2]

Before this plan was adopted, however, the situation became more complex as Carson and then Perley expressed confusion over what had been agreed between the two governments. This arose from their misunderstanding of a provisional instruction issued by the War Office to

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1 Lord Liverpool, Governor General of New Zealand, to Bonar Law, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 12 June 1915, Borden Papers, reel C 4397, p. 117570, NAC; 'Memorandum for the Canadian Government', January 1916, Borden Papers, reel C4397, p. 117557, NAC.

2 Anderson to Pearce, 10 February 1916, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 255, AWM; Anderson to Dept of Defence, 19 August 1916, Anderson Papers, PR83/20, AWM; Unsigned Memorandum, 29 June 1915, RG 9 III A1, vol 3, 2-2-21, NAC.

Southern Command, which declared that no charge should be made for issues to the CEF in the field or for their travel expenses. The import of these instructions seemed to be strengthened later when the Canadians were informed that there was no need for them to form an Army Service Corps, since all troops in the field would be supplied from the one source. Perley and Carson took this to mean that the British would be supplying these services free, rather than charging for them on an average rate. Because of this, Colonel Ward, the Chief Paymaster for the Canadian Contingents, informed Ottawa that there was no need to make provision for these expenses.[1]

It is probable that the British had received an indication of this misunderstanding, for in March they wrote to Canada, Australia and New Zealand and asked each to confirm that they agreed to keep to their undertakings to pay the full expenses of their contingents. All, including the Canadians on 27 April, agreed. However, because they had been given no instructions about financial arrangements by the dominions, the British carried out this exchange on a governmental level and not through the High Commissioner's Office, and so Perley and Carson had no real idea that these decisions had been made. They therefore formed a different view from that agreed by Ottawa.[2]

Because of this, when Borden was in London in June and July 1915 Perley pressed him to agree that the Canadians would not be responsible for their total debt to the British, and to account for much of the rest through supplies for troops in the field. Carson was also concerned about the matter, and he wrote to Sam Hughes in July complaining that the British were now trying to charge the Canadians for expenses in the field, whereas he was under the impression that this would not be done. These charges would cost Canada dearly since thousands of Canadians had already been in France for some months. He had been told by the British Treasury

> that it would be quite impossible for them to institute any system by which they could tell us the exact expense involved in feeding, transporting and keeping up the equipment of our forces in the field, and they again suggested that the best plan, or plans, would be to

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1 Memorandum for the Canadian Government, January 1916, Borden papers, reel C 4397, items 117551-117557, NAC.

2 Ibid.

strike an arbitrary number of men to be always accounted for, and at an arbitrary price of so many shillings, or otherwise, per day.

Carson told the British that he would leave this matter to be settled by Sam Hughes when the latter arrived in Britain in the near future.[1]

Perley's misunderstanding over what had been decided between the British and Canadian authorities was still unresolved, and in August he wrote to the War Office expressing his desire that it should keep to the original agreement and that it would pay for all Canadian expenses in the field. Not surprisingly, the British refused to agree to this and appealed to the 'Anglophile Perley' to support the Empire in a like manner to other dominions, citing the New Zealand Government's agreement to do so as a further reason for the CEF's paying for the full cost of its troops. But the Canadian Government had made no provision for this expense which was already running at two million dollars per month.[2]

Hughes and Borden were both in England in early July 1915, and during their visit Perley was informed that the British were correct in charging for supplies and services; although he expressed regret 'to see the Dominion having to take on such a heavy burden,' he agreed 'after careful consideration that there is no other course open to us under the circumstances, but to pay the entire cost'. By June 1916 the Canadians and the British were aiming at figures for the costs which they mutually agreed to be fair, although the British wanted the right to revise the figures if there were future changes in circumstances. Perley agreed to this, but not Carson, who wanted to 'leave open no door for revisions', although he would agree that changes could be discussed in the future 'if it was decided that it was to our mutual advantage to do so'.[3]

One of the difficulties in coming to a figure for the capitation rate was the allocation of appropriate costs. There were two aspects to this: the cost of what the individual soldier 'eats, wears and pockets' and each division's proportional share of the costs of the army as a whole. Included in this latter were such matters as transport, trench supplies and artillery support. The

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1 Ibid; Carson to Hughes, 9 July 1915, RG 9 III A1, vol 3, 2-2-21B, NAC.

2 Haycock, *Sam Hughes*, 262; Carson to Hughes, 31 August 1915, RG 9 III A1, vol 3, 2-2-21B, NAC; Carson to Hughes, 15 November 1915, RG 9 III A1, vol 3, file 2-2-21B, NAC.

3 Perley to Borden, 11 February 1916, Borden Papers, reel C 4397, page 117539, NAC; Perley to Borden, 15 June 1916, Borden papers, reel 4398, pages 117624-5, NAC; Carson to Perley 3 June 1916, Borden papers, reel 4398, pages 117665-117666, NAC.

British agreed, however, not to charge for certain expensive items which Canada did not supply, such as the air service and siege artillery.[1]

In practice the British Treasury was able to get some precise figures for the cost of keeping a man in the field in France, calculating that the mean cost per head for a soldier in France was 9/6d per day plus munitions (chiefly artillery). Of this, the Canadians paid 4/- in wages and other more minor expenses. The remaining 5/6d was made up of costs of rations, forage, clothing, equipment and stores and fuel (about 4/- per day), such matters as the air service, engineer stores and the like which were not directly supplied to the Canadians, and for sea transport. This figure was then halved and 2/9d charged to the CEF. Munitions cost approximately 3.5 pence for small arms ammunition and 2/- for gun ammunition per man per day. The conclusion of this exercise was that a fair charge would be five shillings daily plus the cost of gun ammunition. When the British calculated the Canadian liability they found that the charge for the artillery came to 1/6d so a fair daily capitation rate would be 6/6d. Bonar Law was informed that this would be 'the full inclusive rate' but that it could be altered, since the Canadians were not always issued with a full complement of guns and to reflect changes as they occurred on the battle front.[2]

Seizing on the term 'full inclusive rate', Bonar Law noted that this indicated that, if anything, the scale was 'against the Canadians', and he suggested that it would be fairer if the British agreed to the Canadians paying a daily figure of 6/-. This figure had already been suggested by Perley, even though the Canadian Treasury had only allocated a sum of 5/- per day. Bonar Law also knew that 6/- would be a better figure because, although it was lower than the true cost, it was one that was sustainable against attack in the Canadian Parliament, given that sixpence per man per day accumulated to a figure of hundreds of thousands of pounds per year. He stressed that the other dominions should pay the same price.[3]

From all this it appears that when Anderson went through the onerous process of arriving at a capitation amount for the AIF, he was trying to calculate a figure which had already been decided, since his

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1 Sir Charles Harris, Copy of Departmental Memorandum, 23 February 1916, CO 616/63, PRO.
2 Ibid; Harris to Bonar Law, 21 March 1916, CO 616/63, PRO.
3 Bonar Law to Harris, 23 March 1916, CO 616/63, PRO.

deliberations with the British resulted in the AIF being charged the above figure. Between them the British and the AIF came up with the following daily costs for the men of the AIF and this became the basis of the proposal agreed to on 31 May 1916.[1]

	s	d
Rations	1	10
Forage		5
Clothing	1	3
Equipment and general stores		8
Fuel, drugs, stationery etc.		1.5
Ammunition guns and bombs 8.5 pence small arms 3.5 pence	1	0
Small arms maintenance and replacement		3
Warlike stores (repairs & upkeep, artillery, transport vehicles, signal and electrical stores)		6
Replacement horses		1
Sea transport		3
TOTAL	6	4.5

This figure was rounded down to 6/- per day, the same figure that the CEF wanted to pay (but note that there was no compensation for the air service which Australia, but not Canada, supplied). Anderson remarked that this figure, which was to be applied from 1 January 1916, was lower than actual cost and greatly to Australia's advantage. As he wrote to the Defence Department:

> The item sea transport 3d is, of course, nominal and quite ridiculous. In the Levant the cost of sea transport was about 2/9d but the War Office having agreed with Canada on a basis of 6/- and realising the fact of our people being elsewhere together with the regretted and admitted mismanagement that accompanied our unfortunate expedition, prefer to quote the Canadian rate of 3d rather than the actual cost of 2/9d.[2]

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1 Report No. 18, 15 May 1917, page 2, MP 367, file 470/8/590, AA.
2 Anderson to Dept. of Defence, July 1916, A 571/1, item 1920/9284, AA.

These arrangements included a stipulation that credit would be given for items supplied by the dominions to their own troops. This was, in Australia's case, principally food and clothing but for the CEF included some weapons and some equipment. Thus, for the Gallipoli campaign the capitation rate was to be 5/10d daily because most of the soldier's clothing had been supplied from Australia. This concession was typical of the way in which the British generally endeavoured to treat the dominions with absolute fairness, and was matched by other concessions such as the decision to give credit for salvage recovered from the battlefields.[1]

Essential to this agreement was some means of calculating the numbers of soldiers who were in France or the Middle East so that the correct capitation could be charged. This was not a simple process because the British, the AIF and the CEF had found problems in keeping records accurately. Under battle conditions, for example, it was simple for officers to fail to notify the Third Echelon (British records section in France) immediately of casualties or of men who had rejoined their units after being reported missing. In neither the AIF nor the CEF had any attempt been made to record daily strengths, so a method had to be formed to arrive at a figure for these. The Canadians agreed that they would base their figures on monthly returns prior to 15 October, but from that date on, they would demand that they be supplied with daily returns of numbers. Anderson, on the other hand, did not agree with this because he saw that accepting a total for the end of the month only had the potential to cost Australia a great deal of money. If troops arrived in France near the end of the month, the country would be charged as if they had been in France for the whole month. This meant that if a division of 20,000 men arrived on the 26th of the month, Australia would be overcharged by £150,000. At a time when Australia was in the process of sending five divisions to France this was not a hypothetical situation. His solution, which was adopted, was that the figures for the beginning of the month should be averaged with those for the end of the month.[2]

Although much effort had gone into calculating a fair capitation rate, the end result quickly became out of date. Australia had agreed to the capitation rate plus additional charges for the transport of the divisions

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1 Anderson to Dept. of Defence, 30 November 1916, A 571/1, item 1920/9284, AA.

2 J. G. Ross, Chief Paymaster CEF, to Perley, 17 October 1916, Borden Papers, reel C 4398, NAC; Anderson to Dept. of Defence, 21 August 1916, A 571/1, item 1920/9284, AA.

from Egypt and the cost of outfitting them with guns and vehicles and sundry equipment such as steel helmets (since I Anzac Corps had arrived without these) but the beginning of the Battle of the Somme shortly after the first divisions arrived in France caused a huge increase in the expenditure of artillery ammunition, and the British soon found that the capitation figures agreed to earlier were no longer relevant. The allowance for artillery ammunition at a cost of 1/- per day was now far too low and they now proposed a revision of the figures.[1]

By March 1917 the British were able to calculate figures for this additional ammunition use, they calculated the total cost of all shells used in France by the types of guns with which the dominions were issued and then multiplied that figure by the number of such guns held by the dominion. This was then averaged per man to arrive at a capitation sum which they asked the dominions to pay. For Australia this additional figure was 2/7d per head for the quarter ending 30 June 1916, 9/7d for the September quarter and 5/1d for the December quarter. As Anderson pointed out to Australia, this figure did not include depreciation of guns (which were replaced at no additional cost) nor the costs of guns not used by the Australians themselves but still used to support them. A figure which incorporated these additional figures would be a large one, since the British used an intricate pattern of inter-locking fire supported by Army artillery batteries to support attacks and protect trenches, and the number of guns firing in support of an attack would be large.[2]

The Australians accepted that the principle behind this charge was legitimate and accepted the British figures as being correct (although they did audit them after the war). They also continued to accept changes to the figures for gun ammunition for the next two years, because ammunition use varied with the intensity of the fighting and steadily increased as artillery became more and more important in the war. The Canadians were not so quick to accept the additional charges and were given considerably higher concessions than those enjoyed by the Australians. In March 1917 the War Office wrote to the Canadians and pointed out that artillery costs had increased greatly and that it wished to exercise its right to adjust the rate charged them. It had agreed to charge the negotiated rate until 28 October

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1 War Diary Director of Ordnance Services, BEF, 17 May 1916, AWM 29/69, AWM.
2 Anderson to Treasury, 8 March 1917, A 571/1, item, 1920/9284, AA.

1916 but now wanted to revise the figure upwards, and cited figures for artillery costs of 2/- per man for the quarter ending June 1916, 7/8d for the September quarter and 4/9d for the December quarter. These were substantially lower than the corresponding figures for the AIF because the latter had a higher complement of artillery. Further, in a concession not granted to the Australians, the Canadians were informed that they need not pay for the increases for all of 1916, but would be asked to pay from November.[1]

Despite the concessions, Perley objected and indicated that he wanted to pay only from 2 March 1917, the date on which the British had informed him of the change. Arguing that this would be too great a concession, given that they were already losing money over the arrangement, the British insisted that they wanted the increases to take effect from November 1916. In June Borden wrote to Perley and told him that the Canadians should discuss the matter with the British since they appeared to have right on their side. Then followed a series of letters in which Perley tried to argue that the new rates should only apply from March when the Canadians were informed of the British intention to vary the rates. Eventually, despite their belief in their case, the British appear to have granted a further concession to Perley, and the CEF was charged only an extra 1/- for ammunition until 31 March 1917. From then until 31 December 1917 it was charged 4/4d per day, and 2/3d until 31 March 1918. For the rest of the war the Canadians were charged a fixed sum of £6,653,580 instead of a capitation amount. These figures are substantially lower than the equivalent Australian figures, and not simply because the Canadians had one fewer division in the field and hence had less guns. Not surprisingly, when the Canadians audited these figures after the war, they were happy to accept them as a correct indication of their debt for artillery support.[2]

Probably the most important facet of the whole question of capitation is not the manner in which the charges were allotted or the way in which they had to be increased during the war, but the manner in which the British were willing to make considerable concessions to the dominions.

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1 Sir Charles Harris (Assistant Financial Secretary at the War Office) to Sir George Perley, 2 March 1917, Borden Papers, reel 4322, pages 43606-8, NAC.

2 Harris to Perley 10 March 1917, Borden Papers, reel C 4322, page 43610, NAC; 'Exhibit A', Kemp Papers, MG 27 ll D 9, vol 166, file 1E, NAC; Kemp Papers, MG 27 ll D 9, vol 166, file 1 E, NAC.

There is no doubt that, onerous as it was, the financial burden placed on the dominions was much less than the actual cost of the supplies and ammunition that they received. It is clear that the British were willing to make every monetary concession to the dominions if this would ease their administrative burden and assist them in maintaining, and perhaps even increasing their armies in the field. As a nation historically long used to financially supporting its allies, the British knew when to concede on money matters where they were not willing to make concessions in matters of command or tactics. Although the capitation appears to have been arrived at without significant Australian input, Anderson's business sense helped him to arrive at a realistic figure independently of the negotiations between other parties and thus to come to a compromise with the British. That the AIF had found an efficient way of handling a potentially troublesome issue demonstrated once again the efficient and effective functioning of its higher administration and the individuals who staffed it.

Chapter 5

Supplying and Equipping the Forces

One of the factors that enabled both Australia and Canada to lessen their capitation burden was the extent to which they supplied their troops' needs from their own resources. Both dominions had tried to achieve some level of independence in military supplies before the war, but the great pressures that this conflict placed upon them rendered these attempts of limited value.

In 1914 Australia had only just begun its attempts to achieve self-sufficiency in military supplies and ordnance. After his inspection of the dominion's military preparedness in 1910 Kitchener had recommended this as necessary and by April 1910 the Australian government had authorised the establishment of government-owned factories to make small arms, uniforms, cordite and leather goods for military use. There were some complaints about the establishment of these factories, not the least from manufacturers who had reasonably hoped to obtain the contracts for this profitable business. However, the government insisted on keeping the factories as state-owned enterprises and had neither the political benefits nor disadvantages found in the Canadian system of private manufacture and lost the chance for ministerial patronage.[1]

When the 1st Australian Division sailed for Europe (as it thought) it was complete with all requirements other than its full complement of British made 18 Pounder Quick Firing guns, partly because under the new British establishment there were six guns to a battery while the AIF initially retained the old system of four guns. It was also totally deficient in howitzers since Australia had none of the new 4.5 inch weapons with which the British were equipped. Its rifles were the British designed Lee-Enfield, some made in Australia, while the uniform was a unique Australian design. The particular features of the uniform were a lighter and more comfortable boot than the British wore, a loose fitting tunic, which proved particularly suitable to the hot climate of the Middle East but which was also more than suitable for France, and leather equipment. Bridges

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1 Ernest Scott, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume XI : Australia During the War* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1936), 236-8.

appreciated that these differences could be important when replacement equipment, stores and clothing would be needed, and thought that the 'Imperial Government will be glad if Australia furnishes, from time to time, stocks of equipment, clothing and stores'. Again we see evidence of his belief that the AIF would be absorbed into a larger British organisation.[1]

Bridges saw that boots would need to be replaced quickly, and requested that 20,000 should be dispatched within a month of the force's sailing. Experience proved him correct in his belief that boots and clothing would have an extremely short life in the field; and at Gallipoli trousers lasted only four months while socks lasted fourteen days. This ensured that there was a constant demand for supplies to be sent out from Australia, especially as the men of the AIF soon became very emphatic in their refusal of any but Australian made clothing and its unique design.[2]

Included in the equipment supplied for the 1st Division were 26,000 rifles and 36 18 Pounder QF guns. This left 76 18 Pounders and 50,500 of the latest pattern rifles in Australia. At the time the government indicated that this should be a sufficient reserve unless it decided to supply more than a further 20,000 men for overseas service. The extra 20,000 men were dispatched very quickly, and this led to problems in the supply of rifles; by January 1915 there were reports of brigades being short of rifles and of reinforcements being sent overseas without them. By the following March this situation had become so serious that arrangements had to be made with the British for reinforcements to be issued with a rifle in Australia for the voyage, to be replaced in Egypt with British issued weapons and the Australian rifles returned home for subsequent use.[3]

Initially the Australian Government appealed to the British for help with the shortfall. The latter were having problems supplying their own New Army, and simply advised the Australians in June to work the Lithgow Small Arms Factory in double shifts. This was done, but still not enough weapons were manufactured as Lithgow could produce only 2,000

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1 C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume 1* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1921), 57-8;*Official History Vol. X1* , 253-261; Bridges to Pearce, 13 October 1914, AWM 10, item 4301/14/39, AWM.

2 *Official History Vol. X1* , Sellheim to Dept of Defence, 9 October 1915, B 539/1, item AIF 112/6/9, AA.

3 Colonel J. G. Legge, memorandum, 22 September 1914, AWM 27, item 302(4), AWM; Report to Dept. of Defence, 12 December 1915, AWM 25, item 49/17, AWM.

per month where 5,000 were needed. Rifles, therefore, remained in short supply in Australia until the following year when the British had expanded their output to a level where they felt confident in supplying Australia's needs as well as their own.[1]

Because rifles thereafter were supplied almost entirely by the British, the most important item sent from Australia during the war became clothing. The Australian uniform was distinctive and as national sentiments began to grow in the AIF (sometimes expressed as an anti-British feeling), the troops began to insist on wearing only this uniform. Even if their own uniform was in rags, Australian troops preferred it to the British pattern clothing. The result of this attitude was that Australia had to maintain large stocks of clothing in Egypt, and later England, to outfit the AIF.[2]

Anderson maintained that this was a waste of money because uniforms of better quality could be made more cheaply in Britain. It was obvious that, as most of the material for the clothing was woven in England, the cloth was more expensive in Australia even though the original wool came from there. His argument was that even though the government was anxious to promote employment in Australia, it would be better business sense to manufacture the uniforms in Britain. He demonstrated this by stating that jackets could be made in Britain for 14/- compared to 25/- to 30/- in Australia, and according to the War Office the British made goods were of a superior quality, an observation scarcely free of bias.[3]

Anderson's arguments were to no avail in the face of the soldiers' clearly expressed desire to wear only Australian clothing. Birdwood was driven to comment in 1917 that the clothing of the men was in very poor condition due to the constant damage it suffered in the trenches (from getting snagged in barbed wire, etc) but that the men did not want it replaced with British clothing. Legge went further claiming that 'the men *hated* (my emphasis) British made jackets and trousers and only wanted Australian goods'. As a result, contracts were let several times with British firms to manufacture Australian uniforms, but in each case they had to be cancelled

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1 Scott, *Official History Vol. X1* , 261.
2 Ibid., 254-5.
3 Anderson to Dept. of Defence, 28 August 1916 and 21 September 1916, PR 83/20, AWM.

because of the government's insistence that such goods be manufactured in Australia.[1]

Supply of suitable cloth had been a problem in Australia for some time. The government commenced the war with what it believed was a year's supply of khaki cloth and clothing, but the great demand for uniforms soon exhausted this. The government secured the entire output of all Australian woollen mills but production was not sufficient to cover the shortfall before the end of 1916. In this period of shortage Anderson was able to secure a further large supply of clothing. The kit store at Horseferry Road held 40,000 kitbags, largely containing spare clothing and souvenirs of the men serving in France; Anderson ordered that these be opened and searched for government issued clothing, which was then added to general stores for issue in France. The result was an addition to stocks of over 20,000 each of shirts, jackets, trousers etc. This proved to be a safety issue as well because many souvenirs were found in the kitbags, including deteriorating cordite and over 1,000 live shells, all of which had to be destroyed.[2]

The item of clothing that caused more problems than anything else was the Australian issue boot. The AIF boot was very well suited to hot, dry climates, being light and comfortable but it did not wear well in the wet. When the troops arrived in France and had to march on French roads after a spell in the trenches, large numbers of the boots disintegrated. The AIF made attempts to replace the Australian boots with ones made in Britain, but again the soldiers resisted the change. Surveys were made to ascertain which was the better boot, and eventually the government decided that it would keep the Australian boot after it had been fitted with a stronger sole and made more water-proof. These changes improved the boot, but to the end of the war there were still occasional complaints about the quality of the Australian-made boot, although the troops refused to change to the less comfortable British boot.[3]

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1 Birdwood to Munro Ferguson, 24 December 1917, Pearce Papers, A4719, bundle 1, folders 1-2, AA; Legge to Secretary of Defence, 23 December 1917, Bean Papers, AWM 38, 3 DRL 606, item 255, AWM; *Official History Vol. X1* , 255.

2 *Report on the Department of Defence From First of July 1914, until the Thirtieth of June, 1917. Part 1* (Melbourne: Government Printer, [n.d.]), 266-267; C.E.W. Bean, 'Our Army's Property. A Gigantic Wardrobe. The Kit Stores of the AIF', in despatch Anderson to Dept of Defence, 16 November 1916, PR 83/20, AWM.

3 *Official History Vol. X1* , 258-9. Birdwood to Pearce, 1 March 1918, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 26(a), AWM.

There was one case in which Australian issued equipment was replaced by British equipment, and this was the leather harness worn by the soldiers and upon which were hung packs, ammunition pouches and other equipment. In France, the leather proved unsatisfactory as it stretched when wet, packs slipped to uncomfortable positions and ammunition fell out of ammunition pouches. Very quickly the Australians made a decision to replace the leather with the webbing equipment used by the British. This was a sensible change which won the approval of the troops, and from late 1916 the AIF used Webb equipment exclusively. Once again, the administration of the AIF had proved more than capable of adapting to the needs of its force and meeting them efficiently and well.[1]

By way of contrast, the Canadian circumstances were not as simple. The CEF had left Canada equipped with much non-British pattern equipment which proved unsatisfactory for use in France. Calls came for it to be replaced, but Sam Hughes objected strongly and it took some time and much wasted money before satisfactory replacement occurred.

There was a number of reasons why some of this unsuitable equipment was retained for so long. There were financial reasons: 'supplying Sam Hughes's soldiers became a vital stimulus for a sagging economy.' There were political reasons: supporters of the Tory Party were making large profits from supplying the equipment. Finally, to a large extent, it was simply due to the insistence of Hughes himself. His patriotism led him to demand that the CEF should be equipped with Canadian equipment, while he was too stubborn to admit that equipment which he recommended might be unsatisfactory.[2]

Probably the most contentious of all the Canadian made equipment was the Ross Rifle. This was a rifle designed by the eccentric Scottish nobleman, Sir Charles Ross, and manufactured in Quebec. The Canadian decision to manufacture the rifle had been controversial when it was made in 1901, and the controversy continued throughout the service life of the weapon.

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1 Scott, *Official History, Vol. X1* 257.

2 Desmond Morton, *Canada and War: A Military and Political History* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1981), 57.

The rifle had been adopted after an evaluation by a committee composed mainly of target shooters rather than military men and it entered manufacture in 1902. After numerous production delays, the rifle was first issued to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in 1904. It was in service with the RCMP that the real shortcomings of the rifle became obvious. The rifle was a superb target weapon but it was not a good rifle in field conditions. In particular, it had a tendency to jam, especially when fired rapidly. Unfortunately, Sam Hughes, a keen target shooter, had become a great advocate of the rifle. His advocacy became all the more heated as moves were made early in the war to rearm the CEF with British Lee-Enfields at the expense of the Ross.[1]

For the British and many thinking Canadians, it was obvious that there would be problems if a large formation serving in the BEF were not armed with the British standard infantry weapon. Even though the Ross took the .303 round of the British weapons, the need for spare parts would always cause difficulties. This need for standardisation was important but when the members of the CEF started to reject the Ross, Sam Hughes was enraged.

While the Ross was a good weapon in the hands of a man who knew and liked it, it did have a minor design fault which gave it a tendency to jam when men firing it rapidly were not fully familiar with it. This problem was greatly aggravated when it was not used with Canadian manufactured rounds, which were designed for the Ross. Given these problems, it is obvious that on the Western Front it was inevitable that the time would come when large numbers of the rifle would jam when they were most needed. The first major occurrence was during the Second Battle of Ypres, and soldiers reacted by discarding it in favour of Lee-Enfields and complaining bitterly about its problems. These complaints reached such a volume that Alderson passed them on to the GOC, Sir John French, who rearmed the 1st Canadian Division with Lee-Enfields.[2]

This action enraged Hughes and, supported by Borden, he ordered that the other Canadian divisions be armed with the Ross. Borden probably

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1 Ron Haycock, 'Early Canadian Weapons Acquisition: " — That Damned Ross Rifle"', *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, 14:3 (Winter 1984/85), 49-50.

2 Ibid., 53; I am grateful also to Professor Haycock for a personal explanation on the strengths and weaknesses of the Ross given to me in Kingston in January 1992.

did not understand the technical aspects of the debate, and believed Hughes when the latter argued that the whole question was a conspiracy on the part of the British. Hughes' dictate, however, did not solve the problems nor end the complaints, despite the CEF holding a series of trials of the rifle and re-working it a number of times. The result of all this was that the troops continued to distrust the weapon. The problem continued to escalate until it came to a head in February 1916 when General Alderson led an attack on the weapon, causing it to be withdrawn from service in June, much to the relief of most of the soldiers in the CEF.[1]

As an issue in the administration of a dominion army, the Ross case is important because it reflected many of the virtues and weaknesses of a military relationship between a major and minor power. In the early years of the war the British did not have the capacity to manufacture enough rifles for their own use and were grateful for any help given in this by the Canadian weapon. Later, when it became obvious that the Canadian troops were losing confidence in the rifle, the British were reluctant to demand that it be replaced. It appears that in this, as in matters of capitation, they were willing to agree to the demands of the dominion in lesser matters so that there would be no danger of its questioning its participation in the war. Here they were especially cautious because of Sam Hughes' vitriolic championing of 'his' rifle, which too often descended to abuse of the British and their 'plots'.[2]

Hughes found other 'evidence' to support his suspicions as more of the Canadian-made equipment of the CEF was rejected in the early years of the war. Canada had not followed the pre-war demands for uniformity of equipment when establishing the CEF, and its establishment differed from that of the BEF in a number of ways other than in the rifle with which it was equipped. Its transport, including motor vehicles, horse-drawn carts, motor cycles and bicycles, were all different from the British pattern. There were differences also in the accoutrements of the soldiers. They carried their gear on the 'Oliver Equipment' rather than the British pattern Webb equipment; they were dressed in Canadian-made clothing and boots, and were armed with Colt revolvers and machine guns. The most bizarre piece of equipment with which they were issued was the 'McAdam Shield

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1 Ibid., 55.
2 Ibid., 56.

Shovel', a heavy shovel with two holes cut in it. This was intended to be carried in front of an attacking soldier to protect him from enemy fire or to form an armoured breastwork on a trench, but it proved equally useless as a shovel and a shield.

The British objected to most of these not because they were Canadian, as Hughes believed, but because the Canadians would experience problems in obtaining spare parts for them from the dumps established in France. Some, however, were rejected by both the British and the Canadians because they were not practical on the battlefields of the Western Front. No matter what the reason, a group led by Hughes complained bitterly over any attempt to replace Canadian equipment with British made equipment.

The reasons for this group's objections varied. Some objected to missing out on the valuable contracts that had been handed out in the past as part of the political largesse which both Canadian political parties had bestowed on their loyal supporters. To an extent, their objections should have been allayed when the British granted Canada contracts for the manufacture of other military stores (chiefly shells and explosives). These contracts were very lucrative and any companies that were able to switch their production into these areas shared in a bounty worth over $1,000,000,000 to Canada.[1]

Before contracts were awarded for the manufacture of these munitions, Hughes objected strongly, not least because in the past he had benefited both politically and personally from such contracts. In 1915, the Public Accounts Committee investigated the 'War Contracts Scandals' and issued a report that was very scathing of the Government. It claimed that Hughes awarded many contracts to his friends, citing one for bicycles awarded despite the bid being 75 - 90% higher than another tender. The report led to the possibility of the cancellation of such contracts, something that Hughes objected to strongly because this would deprive him of valuable opportunities for patronage. Others objected to the changes because they resented British interference in Canadian affairs. Again Hughes led the way here, possibly feeling that there was some British plot afoot to reduce

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1 William Beahen, 'A Citizen's Army: The Growth and Development of the Canadian Militia, 1904 to 1914' (PhD thesis, Department of History, University of Ottawa, 1981), 268; MUN 5/173/1142/38, PRO.

Canadian autonomy and the credibility of the Minister of Militia, as well as providing another excuse around which to organise his objections.[1]

It is difficult to sum up briefly the history of Canadian equipment. Some equipment was abandoned because it was rejected by the soldiers. The Oliver equipment and the McAdam shovel are the best examples of this. The former was made of leather like the early Australian equipment, and it too caused problems when wet. It carried only 50 to 80 rounds of ammunition where the Webb carried 120, it was uncomfortable, it did not adapt to the wearer's shape as did the Webb, and finally it did not incorporate a valise to carry small items of kit. For all these reasons, as in the Boer War, it was found unsuitable by the troops. The shovel was simply a laughable piece of equipment. It was too heavy to carry easily, its weight and the sighting and firing holes made it inefficient for digging, and yet it was not an effective shield. Despite Hughes' orders, few made it to the front.[2]

Some equipment was not allowed into France for a variety of reasons, but the question of finding spares for exotic equipment was always in the mind of the British. Included in this category were the Indian motor cycle (banned because it was too heavy) and the Canadian Bain wagons which had a number of problems, the most important being that they were not as strong nor carried as large a load as the British GS wagon. Other equipment was used for a time, but was replaced mainly due to the problems of finding spare parts. Included in these were, of course, the Ross Rifle, but also the Colt Machine Guns. Canadian boots partly come into this category. Like the Australian boot, the Canadian boot was not good in very wet conditions. To solve the problem, Hughes had thousands of 'larrigans' (water-proof overshoes) sent over, but they proved unsatisfactory too and for much of the war the CEF wore British boots. It was not until early 1918 that the Canadians started making for themselves a boot of a satisfactory standard. As with the Australians, any other goods that the Canadians wanted were supplied by the British from British dumps.[3]

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1 Borden papers, reel C 4310, pages 31866-67, NAC.

2 Alderson to Carson, 28 March 1915, Pye Papers, folder 5, item 74672, Queen's University, Douglas Library, Kingston; Harris, 'From Subordinate to Ally', 118; Haycock, *Sam Hughes*, 234.

3 'Report on Operations, Department of the Director of Supplies and Transport Since its Inception October 1915', 20 February 1917, Turner Papers, MG30, E46, vol 5, NAC; Alderson to Carson, 28 March 1915, Pye Papers, folder 5, item 74672, Queen's University, Douglas

In Chapter 9 we will examine the way in which this latter system functioned. What we have seen in the last four chapters is a broad outline of the formation and operation of the Australian and the Canadian organisation, the methods by which they arranged for the supply of their equipment and how they paid for their costs. The 1911 Imperial Conference had tried to plan for issues such as these and in most ways the planning proved to be adequate, with most difficulties emerging from the Canadian failure to follow the intentions of the Conference by their electing to outfit their forces with equipment different from that used by the rest of the 'imperial' forces. By way of contrast, because the Australians had virtually the same equipment as the British, they were able to replenish equipment and ammunition with no difficulties at supply dumps. We find also that the British maintained harmony in supply and costs because they were willing to compromise at most points of debate, all to maintain the harmony necessary for their allies to accept the heavy casualties they were suffering in the war. In the next chapter we will examine the ways in which both tried to solve their manpower problems in the imperial context.

Library, Kingston; The British suggested replacing the Colt on 13 March 1916, War Diary, Director Ordnance Services, WO 95/58,PRO; 'First Report QMG Branch 20 February 1917', Brigadier General A.D. McRae, Turner Papers, MG30, E46, vol 5, NAC; 'Final Report of the Quartermaster General to the Honourable Minister Overseas Military Forces of Canada 1919', Kemp Papers, MG27, II, D9, vol 188, NAC.

Chapter 6

Maintaining the Forces

For both the Australians and the Canadians, one of the most worrying aspects of their participation in the war was the need to maintain the size of their forces, especially after their initial expeditionary forces grew to a much larger size. This problem was one that had to be dealt with mainly by the respective home government; certain aspects of it, however, impinged on the administration of the two forces.

Both Australia and Canada increased their commitment of a strong division very quickly after sending away the first troops. This was largely in response to a request from the British Government when it became obvious that the war would both last much longer and be bloodier than anyone had expected. Both dominions were willing to accede to the request because both found that they had more than enough volunteers to form another division. The British asked each country also for an increased commitment of reinforcements for their expeditionary force. Initially the British had asked the dominion governments to prepare for a 'wastage' rate in their division of 60% for the first year, but the heavy casualty rate suffered by the BEF in France in the early months of the war led them to ask the dominions to treble this rate of reinforcements to 15% per month.[1]

The Australian Government had no doubts about its ability to supply men, since early enlistments had outstripped its most sanguine expectations. In the first four months of 1915, 33,758 men had volunteered and, after the landings at Gallipoli, men enlisted at an even greater rate so that in the next four months a further 85,320 men volunteered for service, many no doubt inspired by the call from the British Government that 'every man is wanted'. As these men flooded in, it became obvious to the Australian Government that it could afford to place another division in the field, and it authorised the formation of the 2nd Division. Raised and trained in Australia, it was sent to Egypt in May and June 1915 for its final preparation in the new training centres which had been established in that

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1 Cubitt to Australian Government, 1 September 1914, Cubitt to Colonial Office, 8 December 1914, CO 616/14 PRO; Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-1919, Chronology, Appendices and Maps* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938), 722 C, 354; Bean, *Official History ll*, 419.

country. Finally, the British ordered it to Gallipoli in early September where its arrival allowed the AIF to send elements of the 1st Division (whose units were severely stricken with illness) to Mudros and Lemnos for some much needed rest and recuperation. The men benefited from the rest, but after they returned their condition again deteriorated to such an extent that by the end of the campaign the British reported that they were 'temporarily worn out', and that it would take at least three months of rest, refitting, reorganisation and training before they were again ready for combat.[1]

In Australia men continued to flock to the recruiting centres while the British, in response to the high losses in the August battles, had now called for the rate of replacement for wastage to be increased to 20% for the infantry. The extra men were not yet needed to fill out the once depleted battalions at this increased level because the rate of casualties decreased in the four months prior to the evacuation and Egypt began to fill with recruits waiting to be posted to units. consequently, there were 35,000 to 40,000 reinforcements in Egypt when the AIF left Gallipoli. General Godley proposed using these men to form several new divisions, including a separate New Zealand Division, suggesting that Australian recruitment rates warranted the formation of two new divisions in Egypt and a third in Australia. When Birdwood rejoined the AIF on 9 January after relinquishing the command of the Dardanelles Army, he embraced the idea with enthusiasm, foreseeing perhaps that this created the possibility of an Australian and New Zealand Army of which he would be the logical leader.

Birdwood's notion merits further brief mention here because, to make the idea more attractive to the War Office, Birdwood claimed that it would aid recruiting. When Haig and others opposed the idea on the grounds that six divisions was too small a force to make into an army, Birdwood proposed the formation of a 'Dominion Army' that would include the Canadian divisions, claiming that both New Zealand and Canadian officers had indicated their support for such an idea. This expanded force was supported neither by the British High Command (whose stated reason was that it would be too inflexible a formation) nor by senior officers on the spot. Godley, for instance, objected that the New

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1 Robertson, *Anzac & Empire*, 107; Bean to T.H.E. Heyes 15 August 1925, AWM 38, 3 DRL 6060, item 257, AWM; C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume II* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1924), 422, 809; Report to War Office 'Situation in the Eastern Mediterranean', 17 December, 1915, WO 32/5605, PRO.

Zealanders would be 'swamped' by the Australians and Canadians, and that the dominion soldiers would then not mix with imperial units. As a result of these objections, Birdwood did not achieve his aim, although he continued to promote it actively for the next few months and spasmodically for most of the war.[1]

The formation of the new divisions had continued in Egypt and presented an increasing number of administrative problems, despite the admirable system Birdwood devised for the creation of the formations. To shorten the time that the new formations would have to spend in training, and to give all divisions some troops with battle experience, Birdwood split the 'old' brigades (leaving the 2nd Division untouched) and merged them with the reinforcements to form four divisions. Battalions continued to be formed on the basis of state of enlistment (to retain the 'primary groups' based on regional identities found to be important in building up the *esprit de corps* that can often lead to success in battle), but Birdwood split the original battalions into two to form 32 battalions that were then brought up to strength with the reinforcements. Soldiers are always very wary about moving from their original unit because of the loss of the 'primary support groups' that they develop in combat, and some officers and men complained about being shifted, but this attitude disappeared quickly as the divisions began active training and new associations were formed of experienced men and recruits, these extending to special bonds being formed between the original battalions and those formed from them. Birdwood deserves high praise for devising this system of forming the new divisions; it presented a masterly solution to a potential problem and it enabled the Australians to prepare themselves very quickly for the move to France.[2]

The AIF experienced some problems with the force reorganisation because it coincided with an increase in the British Army's establishment arising from the introduction of conscription for single men in that country

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1 Birdwood to Fitzgerald (Private Secretary to Kitchener), 7 February 1916, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57, number 64, PRO. Birdwood to Sir James Allen (New Zealand Minister of Defence), 6 May 1916; Birdwood to Allen, 22 June 1916 and 23 March 1917; Godley to Allen, 1 November 1916; Birdwood to Allen, 23 March 1917, Allen Papers, Pers 2/9, NANZ.

2 C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume III* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1929), 37-8; Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldier's, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 30.

in January with a consequent shortage of equipment. For example, the AIF arrived in France without steel helmets, which were only just being introduced in the BEF, and these had to be supplied shortly before the troops entered the trenches for the first time. Far more important than this was a shortage of howitzers and trained gunners. There were no howitzers available in Egypt so the British had to supply them from England. Although Kitchener had promised that they would be sent 'as rapidly as possible', the AIF left Egypt without the full establishment of these guns and again they had to be supplied after the AIF arrived in France. This was logical at one level because it prevented their being sent to Egypt and then back a few weeks later, but did prevent the gunners training with this basic weapon.[1]

Even on Gallipoli the artillery was under-manned, and with the demand for gunners from the new divisions, this problem now became acute. At first the AIF feared that these men would have to be supplied by the British but to maintain the Australian identity of the AIF, Birdwood took personnel from the infantry and light horse brigades, and in the three to four months available they underwent intensive training that enabled them to reach a satisfactory standard for service in France. Murray, Commander in Chief of the EEF at the time of the transfer to France, believed that the artillery did need some more work, especially in the 'matter of manoeuvre' (something they would not really need for another two years), but conceded that their progress had been up to his expectations despite their lack of equipment. [2]

Probably the greatest problem in forming these new divisions was a shortage of officers of all ranks. In March 1916 Birdwood had only three of his original battalion commanders left with their units and the casualties among company commanders were even greater. To solve this problem he increased the process begun at Gallipoli of promoting officers from the ranks. In Egypt he handed out 1,000 new commissions but he knew that he still did not have enough suitable candidates to provide junior officers for the 3rd Division which the Australian Government was forming in Australia, so he recommended that these officers be selected there. This was

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1 Kitchener to Murray, 31 December 1915, Murray Papers, IWM.

2 F.W. Perry, *The Commonwealth Armies, Manpower and Organisation in Two World Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 26; CiC EEF to CIGS, War Office London, 30 May 1916, AWM 27, item 108, AWM.

the only real solution available to him, but later it led to complaints from men serving in France who believed that the AIF had treated them unfairly and had given advantages to newly enlisted men or to men who had been recuperating in Australia by enabling them to gain promotions more easily than those at the front. Their complaints were to no avail, however, and there was little else Birdwood could have done given that the division had to be formed in Australia and then shipped to Britain at a time when he needed all his experienced men in France.[1]

When it came to selecting commanders for the divisions, Birdwood tried to use British officers but here he clashed with Pearce. Birdwood had already appointed Major General H.B. Walker (a British officer) to command the 1st Division, and he now recommended that Legge retain the 2nd Division while he wanted to give the other two divisions in Egypt to British officers, H.V. Cox and H.A. Lawrence, who were both, like Birdwood, Indian Army officers. Pearce was happy with the choice of Cox because he had led Australian units on Gallipoli and was at that time earning a good reputation while in charge of the new brigades training at Tel el Kabir, but he objected to Lawrence because he believed him 'not an officer of high attainments'. He demanded that Birdwood find an Australian to command the division he had earmarked for Lawrence. Pearce told Birdwood that he appreciated that he needed a free hand for appointments because the responsibility for any failures fell on him, but emphasised that it would be a 'great disappointment' if suitable Australian officers were passed over in favour of British officers.[2]

As a compromise, Pearce suggested that McCay, who was convalescing in Australia after breaking his leg during the Gallipoli campaign, should be given one of the divisions forming in Egypt while Lawrence could wait for the 3rd Division to come from Australia. Birdwood still tried to support Lawrence's candidature by offering to appoint McCay to command the 3rd Division and Lawrence the 5th, but Pearce remained adamant that he wanted McCay to command in France immediately. Birdwood conceded and appointed McCay to command the 5th Division,

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1 Birdwood to Colonel C Wigram, 16 March 1916, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 39, AWM; Munro-Ferguson to Cook, 5 April 1916, Novar Papers 696, item 4026, NLA. Godley to Birdwood, 1 June 1916, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 8, AWM.

2 *Official History Vol. III*, 44-5; Pearce to Birdwood, 4 February 1916, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 25, AWM.

leaving Lawrence to find employment with the British but he did not appoint a commander for the 3rd Division. Instead he informed Pearce that he would take the sensible option of watching how the various Australian candidates (for instance, Monash, Holmes and White) performed in France. As it transpired, Monash's good work with his brigade in Egypt and France won him the command of the 3rd Division and he left France in July to train it in England after it arrived from Australia.[1]

The question of reinforcements arose next in the middle of 1916 after the AIF had been badly hit with casualties in the Battle of the Somme. In the fighting at and around Pozières, the First Anzac Corps had suffered 23,000 casualties and the Fifth Division suffered a further 5,500 at Fromelles. To supply the replacements for these men, the Australian Government either had to increase enlistments or it had to take men from other sources; this would be difficult because, despite the Government's best efforts, enlistments had started to dry up in 1916. To supply the shortfall Hughes, influenced strongly by British Government and military leaders on his visit to Europe at this time, decided that the best method was to introduce conscription as the British had done in January 1916. He introduced a plebiscite on the question in October 1916 and, after the electorate defeated it, another in November 1917. The political turmoil caused in Australia by these two plebiscites is outside the ambit of this work, but the efforts by the British to influence their success and the administrative questions raised by these British efforts and the plebiscites themselves are relevant.[2]

For the administrative services of the AIF, the great question in the plebiscites was to organise the voting in a manner recognised by both sides as being fair and to overcome the obvious difficulties of getting troops on a fighting front to register their votes. They also had to try to satisfy the sometimes conflicting wishes of the Australian Government, which wanted the chance to influence the troops' votes through propaganda and political meetings, with those of the British High Command, which was worried that political meetings held in or near the front could cause a breakdown in discipline.

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1 Bean, *Official History Vol. III*, 45-6; P.A. Pedersen, *Monash as Military Commander* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1985), 131, 137-8.

2 *Official History Vol. III*, 862-3.

The AIF's first task was to appoint a returning officer to arrange the plebiscite. For the first vote held in October 1916 (the actual date varied from unit to unit but in all cases it was before the electorate in Australia voted on 28 October), Hughes appointed Anderson returning officer and his replacement at Horseferry Road, Brigadier General Griffiths, for the second. It is clear from his correspondence with Hughes that Anderson, like most senior officers in the AIF, supported the introduction of conscription and this probably influenced the decision to appoint him, since the other logical candidate was Andrew Fisher, who strongly opposed it.[1]

As returning officer, Anderson had to arrange for the soldiers to vote in the wide variety of places they were serving, in the trenches of France and Flanders, in hospitals in Britain, in the training camps on Salisbury Plain and in the myriad of other places to which the British had posted Australians in England and the Middle East. In camps, voting would have been a simple process, but for troops serving in the wet muddy trenches of the Somme in winter, it was not an easy task. In the second plebiscite, two divisions were serving in the line. It was not compulsory for the men to vote, but if they wished to do so they were required to file through the trenches, enter their officer's dug-out singly and fill in and seal voting papers that they then placed in a sealed ballot box. The officer, in his role as local returning officer, then passed these on through channels to London.[2]

Prior to the voting, Murdoch ran the campaign to gain the soldiers' support. Again his machinations are outside the ambit of this work except in so far as they did, at times, impinge on the work of the administrative section of the AIF. At Hughes' urging, Murdoch tried to arrange meetings in which troops such as Captain A. Jacka VC, and others, including French trade unionists, would address the units in the field. Hughes told Murdoch to try to arrange for these meetings to pass motions in favour of conscription which could be used as propaganda in Australia. Hughes did not get his way because Haig, who was quite happy for meetings to be held as long as they were only addressed by civilians, refused to allow meetings

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1 Diary entry, Bean Diaries, 3 DRL 606, item 60, AWM.
2 Message sent by Murdoch, 11 December 1917, A3934/1, SC 15, item 21, AA;

of soldiers to be addressed by other soldiers. In Murdoch's words, this 'would introduce politics in a virulent form'.[1]

This was not Murdoch's greatest problem, because he found that the soldiers strongly opposed conscription. He wrote to Hughes that the AIF would be 95% likely to pass motions against the change. Despite this he prevailed upon Hughes to order that the soldiers should vote before the rest of Australia. He expected that a favourable vote from the AIF would influence the civilians to follow their lead, while if the soldiers voted against conscription the government would not publish their voting figures but conceal them by merging them with the votes within Australia. Because of this plan, Anderson had to be more than normally cautious that the results of the voting did not 'leak out' before he transmitted them to the government in Australia. As it turned out, the troops in France voted 3 to 1 against conscription and, quick to see which way the wind was blowing, on 22 October (six days before the soldiers finished voting) Murdoch advised Hughes to suppress the vote 'for now and in the future'. Later, when the votes came in from soldiers in the Middle East (who voted 7 to 2 in favour of conscription) and Britain (where the vote was 5 to 2 in favour, this figure including the votes of the 3rd Division which had not yet served at the front), the total soldier vote ended up slightly in favour of conscription but it was too late for Hughes to use the figures to influence votes in Australia.[2]

It appears obvious that while the British were very keen to see the Australian Government introduce conscription, they did not want to appear to be trying to influence the two plebiscites overtly. Despite this, it seems that they did try to influence the results in ways that did impinge upon the administration of the AIF, not least by threatening to collapse Australian formations if conscription was not introduced. It is also probable that the British tried to influence the vote of the second plebiscite (following Australian requests) by ensuring that three divisions were out of the line and the other two in quiet trenches at the time of the vote.

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1 Murdoch to Hughes, October 1916, Hughes Papers, 1538/20/111, NLA; Murdoch to Hughes, 24 October 1916, Murdoch Papers, 2823, folder 23, NLA; Haig Diary, entry 16 October 1916 256/13, PRO.

2 Hughes to Murdoch, October 1916, Hughes Papers 1538/20/111, NLA. Hughes cable to Captain Millet, Hughes Papers, 1538/20/56, NLA. Murdoch to Hughes, 22 October 1916, Hughes Papers, 1538/20/107, NLA; Murdoch to Bonor Law, 20 November 1916, Lloyd George Papers, HLRO; Murdoch to Hughes 22 October 1916, Hughes Papers, 1538/20/224, NLA; Note dated 8 January 1918, Hughes Papers, 1538/16/1, NLA.

Since a threat to disband a division was one that would cause great anguish to all troops in the AIF, but especially to those belonging to the division concerned, it is significant that at the time of each of the plebiscites, the British threatened to disband one of the Australian divisions. This threat was known to numbers of high ranking Australian officers and it appears reasonable to assume that the knowledge would have passed down through the ranks. This assumption seems more reasonable because it appears possible that they tried this tactic with the connivance of influential people connected with the AIF. The rationale for the threat was that 'there would not be enough men to man it if the plebiscite was defeated'.

The first moves were made in early August 1916 soon after Hughes had called the first plebiscite. Australian casualties in the fighting on the Somme had been far heavier than could be replaced by the then rate of reinforcements from Australia. To maintain the four divisions in France in the face of this problem, the British War Office began to make moves to acquire the reinforcements needed from the 3rd Division which at that time was undergoing intensive training on Salisbury Plain. The Australian Government had raised this division in Australia and Monash was preparing it for France as rapidly as possible. He was experiencing problems, however, because severe equipment shortages emerged with the British forming new divisions from the men brought into the army by the new conscription laws. Now the War Office proposed taking trained men from the 3rd Division as a 'temporary' measure to bring the other divisions up to establishment.[1]

The British informed Anderson of their plan, and he in turn wrote to Monash to tell him that he was going to lose from 3,000 to 6,000 men 'on loan'. Monash, naturally, was horrified and he quickly marshalled all aid to help him fight the plan. He wrote to Birdwood, told him of the plan and pointed out the problems caused by the shortages of equipment since he had arrived at Lark Hill camp a month earlier. In particular, the division was short of rifles and so the men, who had only just arrived from Australia, most with only rudimentary training, were still at a low level of preparedness. He contrasted their state with that of many of the men in the reinforcement depots who were fully trained because they were men who

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1 P.A. Pedersen, *Monash* , 149-50.

had been lightly wounded and were now being returned to the front. It was clearly his belief that these men were the ones the AIF should send to France to reinforce the divisions already there.[1]

Monash's letter would not have come as a surprise to Birdwood since Haig had told him of the plan on 12 August, and he was quick to respond. He wrote to the War Office on 15 August and, using the information provided by Monash, pointed out that men of the 3rd Division were less suited to being sent to France than men already in training in the reinforcement depots in England, and that these depots contained enough men to satisfy current needs. Birdwood further suggested taking men from the Light Horse regiments in Sinai, a suggestion that would have been popular with neither the British nor Australians in the Middle East because the Light Horse had just lost 900 men while playing a crucial part in the victory at Romani. In any event, the War Office rejected the suggestion, emphasising that the 'Anzac troops are the keystone of the defence of Egypt'. To support his case, Birdwood stressed to the War Office that the Australian Government would 'much dislike' seeing the division disbanded. However, he did not support Monash and the Australian Government by standing up to the War Office. He could not succeed in this without strong Australian support, when this did not come, he stated that he would agree to the 3rd Division's losing most of its men if a cadre could be left intact to complete the division later. He was confident that this would not happen because the Australian Government would be willing to send more reinforcements so it could retain all five divisions. At this time the War Office also wrote to Anderson with the additional suggestion that the alternative to taking men from Monash was to collapse a division in France. This idea was also conveyed in a reply to Birdwood that clearly invited him to put pressure on the Australian Government by expressing the hope that Australia would 'be able to help us with a special draft. . . . Otherwise I do not see how we are going to be able to maintain four divisions in the field, let alone five'.[2]

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1 Anderson to Monash, 15 August 1916, Bean Papers 3 DRL 606, item 257, AWM; P.A. Pedersen, *Monash*, 150-1; Monash to Birdwood, 16 August 1916, Bean Papers, 3DRL 606, item 257, AWM.

2 Birdwood to Munro- Ferguson, 29 August 1916, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 30; Birdwood to the A.G. War Office, 15 August 1916; Monash to Birdwood, 16 August 1916, Birdwood to DAG (General E.M. Woodward), 16 August 1916, Bean Papers, 3DRL 606, item 257, AWM; A.J. Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1978), 80-82, War Office to Minister of Defence Australia, 28 August 1916, Bean

British pressure resulted in the Australian Government allowing a total of 2,800 men to be sent to France from the 3rd Division, although no more were sent after this initial draft. The key to the British decision was an Australian announcement in September that they would be organising a special draft of 20,000 men immediately transport was available for it. Because this offer was dependent upon the government's winning the plebiscite, it was withdrawn when conscription was rejected and the Department of Defence instead suggested to the British that they should retain the 3rd Division in England as a reserve. The British now gave an indication that their concerns about maintaining AIF forces in France were not as pressing as they had indicated, by sending the division to France. Either they had little doubt about maintaining five Australian divisions, or this was a matter of short term expediency because they believed that the need for a trained formation in the field was more pressing than the concerns about maintaining that division in the middle term. The true British attitude to the whole matter had probably been expressed by Haig when he said to Birdwood that only the Germans wanted to delay the 3rd Division going to France.[1]

Certainly a number of prominent Australians believed that this was all a deliberate plot concocted to help the conscription campaign in Australia. It was a view held strongly by Brudenell White, who wrote to Monash that the whole matter was a political tool to aid the conscription vote. According to Bean, both White and Birdwood were unimpressed with the ploy which Bean believed had been concocted by Hughes and Lloyd George (and it does bear the imprint of these two devious politicians). White was angry because he believed that it was 'not a straight thing to do'. Birdwood was indignant also because he thought it unnecessary, although this did not stop him making a veiled reference to the threat shortly before the ballot in an appeal to the troops to vote for conscription.[2]

Papers, 3DRL 606, item 257, AWM Anderson to AAGAIF, 16 August 1916, Woodward to Birdwood, August 1916 (sic), Bean Papers, 3DRL 606, item 257, AWM.

1 Defence Department to Administrative Headquarters AIF, London, received 5 September 1916, (copy of telegram sent to Secretary of State for the Colonies 31 August 1916), Governor General to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 11 November 1916, Bean Papers, 3DRL 606, item 257, AWM; Pedersen, *Monash*, 150-1,

2 White to Monash, 16 October 1916, White Papers, Melbourne; Diary entry, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 59, AWM. Personal Message from Birdwood to Members of the AIF, October 1916, AWM 27, item 471.2, part 1, AWM.

An indication that the British had not really intended dismantling the 3rd Division was given on 1 February 1917 when they asked the Australian Government to consider forming a 6th division, an idea the British had themselves rejected in May 1916. Clearly the shortage of men that led them to threaten to disband one division could not have been too serious if they thought that the Australians could actually form an additional one nine months later. They claimed that there should have been 350,000 men in Australia fit for general service, and that this would be more than enough to maintain 8 divisions (including two in the Middle East). The Australian Government expressed a willingness to try to form the new division, despite Birdwood's having some reservations, but the effort was short-lived. The government did not believe that the rates of enlistment (about 5,000 men per month) would permit it but in the hope that numbers would improve, it agreed to make the attempt commencing in March 1917 with the formation of the 16th and 17th Brigades. By June 1917, in the face of further heavy casualties and dwindling enlistments, it had become obvious that the two new brigades could not be sent to France 'at present'. By July, even the faint hope expressed by this statement had vanished in the face of the long casualty lists from Third Ypres, and the two brigades were broken up as men were sent from them as reinforcements, most to their previous battalions (to their great pleasure). By September 1917 the AIF had effectively abandoned the idea of a sixth division, and it had been broken up and used as reinforcements for the other divisions.[1]

This coincided with a further British threat to disband a division when Hughes made his second attempt to introduce conscription in December 1917. There is little doubt that this was at least partially a ploy since Murdoch had suggested the idea to Birdwood in November 1917. Shortly thereafter Birdwood threatened to disband the 4th Division and later wrote to Pearce that the threat had been to gain political capital for the plebiscite. Birdwood had begun the process when he wrote to his generals on 9 November and told them that there was a danger that one division, and later possibly one or even two more, would be placed in reserve to act as a feeder division for the others if the plebiscite resulted in a 'no' vote. He

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1 Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15 February 1917, CO 616/68, PRO; Secretary of State for Colonies to Australian Government, 1 February 1917, Australian government to Secretary of State for Colonies, 15 February 1917, CP 78/23, item 1917/89/290, AA; Birdwood to Munro Ferguson, 17 January 1917, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 30, AWM; Notes for Official History, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 257, AWM.

made sure that the message was widely promulgated by sending a copy of the letter to all officers; there is no evidence that they passed it along to the troops but is not an unreasonable supposition.[1]

The British were quick to make the threat an accomplished fact. By 6 November Haig announced that he had decided to reorganise the five Australian divisions into a corps of four divisions (which suited his administrative arrangements), with the remaining division being used as a depot of reinforcements for the others. On 13 November the British instituted this plan by designating the 4th Division a depot division. Birdwood had already informed the Australian Government of this decision, also using the chance to make a further call for reinforcements, but his plea to the converted was of no avail since the plebiscite was lost by the government.[2]

Despite the loss (or because of it) the 4th Division remained a depot division, and Birdwood and his staff understood that the decision was a definite one. Birdwood's aide-de-camp, Captain A.M. McGrigor, wrote in his diary that the election result would lead to the breaking up of a division at once and perhaps others later. This view was supported by Australian staff plans to rotate the 'depot' division so that the men in one division would not lose morale and cohesion if they realised that their division was no longer going to function as a fighting formation, confirmed on 25 December when Haig's headquarters announced that the 4th Division would no longer be used as a depot division. Over the next few months all Australian divisions were rotated in and out of the line until together they were thrown into combat to help halt the German March offensive in 1918. Admittedly, by the time the decision was made to retain the 4th Division Third Ypres had ground to its muddy conclusion, and it was clear that reduced casualties over the winter months would allow the Australians to build up all divisions and made a permanent depot division unnecessary, but the timing of the decisions, first effectively to disband the 4th Division and then to rescind that decision, is suspicious. Certainly, Australian

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1 Murdoch to Birdwood, 7 November 1917, Birdwood to Pearce 8 December 1918, Birdwood Papers 3 DRL 3376, item 27-28, Birdwood to generals, 9 November 1917, AWM 27, item 471.2, part 1, AWM;

2 Secretary of the War Office to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonial Office, 6 November 1917, CO 616/74, PRO; Secretary of State for the Colonial Office to Munro Ferguson, 13 November 1917, Birdwood to Department of Defence, 5 November 1917, AWM 27, item A 197AWM;

formations were being severely depleted at the time, and Haig could have been trying to improve Australian morale by sending the 4th Division back into the line. On the basis of the evidence we cannot be sure if the whole matter was once again a ploy to win the soldiers' votes, but it is certainly a possibility.[1]

At the same time, Birdwood had launched a ploy of his own to try to influence the plebiscite. After the results of the first plebiscite came out, Birdwood, who was very disappointed in the vote of the AIF in France, attributed the defeat to the conditions under which the soldiers were serving. At the time of the vote they had been changing positions in a time of 'horribly cold and wet weather' and Birdwood came to the conclusion that the conditions had influenced the soldiers to vote against forcing anyone to join them in such discomfort. Now he was determined that the mistake would not be repeated.[2]

The AIF had voted in a Federal election conducted in April 1917, and Birdwood had tried to influence the soldiers to vote for the government by arranging for them to be rested for some weeks beforehand so that they would be in good spirits. Whether or not his plan had anything to do with it, the soldiers in France, like the rest of Australians voted strongly for Hughes in what ended up as a rout for the ALP. The AIF vote was so strongly favourable that Hughes believed it had won him six to eight seats, and this influenced him to make a second attempt at introducing conscription. It was no doubt Murdoch's knowledge that the soldiers had been out of the front line when they voted in the election that in turn influenced him to write to Birdwood to suggest that an announced month's rest out of the trenches for the Australian divisions should coincide with the dates for the plebiscite. Birdwood was able to follow up the suggestion and at the time of the second plebiscite, three of the five Australian divisions were out of the line, in rest positions, undergoing further training including a great many sporting activities. Birdwood had tried to put the men in a happier frame of mind while they were in their new billets, and

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1 Diary entry, 22 December 1917, A.M. McGrigor Papers, IWM; Birdwood to Wigram, 3 November 1917, Major General Butler to Headquarters 4th Army, 25 December 1917, AWM 27, item A 197, AWM.

2 Birdwood to Pearce, 30 November 1916, Bean papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 26(b), AWM.

had told his officers that they had to 'really look after the comforts of their men' in an attempt to influence their vote.[1]

Because the British High Command ordered the transfer of troops from trenches to training positions and only the details were organised by the Australian formation and unit commands, the British had to have agreed to this attempt to influence the soldiers' attitudes. Conditions out of the line had been assessed by 1917 and GHQ had made great improvements on what had happened in the past, especially by placing much greater importance on the concept of inter-unit sporting contests. No doubt Birdwood hoped that these changes would also be helpful in boosting the vote for conscription.[2]

An example of the pattern of activities in those days is given by the war diary of the 21st Battalion. This unit had taken part in the successful Battle of Broodseinde on 4 October and the less successful Battle of Passchendaele on 9 October. In the period from 4 to 10 October it suffered heavily, losing 10 officers and 53 other ranks killed and 9 officers and 311 other ranks wounded with 3 officers and 38 other ranks missing; a total of 424 casualties. In the next twenty-seven days before it voted in the election, this badly depleted battalion spent three days doing fatigues in support trenches, fourteen and a half days in training, one day travelling to another camp, six days at rest and three and a half days playing sport. The actual voting took place over three days, and those days were occupied by inter-battalion sports, a bathing parade and one day in which the morning was spent training and the afternoon in an inter-company sporting contest. The day after voting finished, it marched to another area and the next day entered the front line. Obviously the battalion had to recuperate from its mauling in Flanders, but it is equally obvious that the administration of the AIF had placed the soldiers in the best of all possible conditions for the period of the vote.[3]

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1 Birdwood to Murdoch, 17 April 1917, Murdoch to Birdwood, 11 June 1917, Murdoch to Birdwood 8 November 1917, Murdoch Papers, 2823, folder 21, NLA; Birdwood to Pearce, 9 November 1917, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 26(a) AWM.

2 J.G Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies 1914-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 78-9, 87-8; The information on activities out of the line in the winter of 1917 has been based upon a sample of one battalion war diary from each division over the relevant period.

3 *Official History Vol. IV*, pp 842-900; War Diary 21st Battalion, AWM 4, item 23/38, AWM.

In another effort to try to encourage the soldiers to vote in favour of conscription, Birdwood wrote to Pearce to push for a 'Gallipoli medal' to be issued to all troops who had been on the Peninsula before the evacuation. His idea was that the Australians would be encouraged to vote for conscription if men received another service medal. British soldiers who had fought in 1914 were eligible to wear the 1914 Star but Australians who had enlisted in 1914 were not eligible for this because they had not landed on Gallipoli until 1915. Birdwood, who was not eligible for it either, believed that the men desired the recognition and argued that if the government granted it, they would be more inclined to vote in favour of conscription. He argued long and hard for the honour even after the plebiscite was held and lost but the British, who were willing in principle to issue it, saw many difficulties with awarding it to only Australians and New Zealanders who had fought on Gallipoli. Obviously the Canadians also would have a claim for a similar medal since they enlisted at the same time but did not fight in France until April 1915. This question too would have to be settled. Finally, the rock upon which the scheme foundered was the question of awarding the medal to British officers who had fought with the dominion forces. If they were awarded the medal, then they would be given an award denied to British soldiers who had also enlisted in 1914 but not fought until 1915, while if they were not given it then they would miss an award given to the men of the AIF with whom they had fought. The medal was lost on this issue, with the men of the AIF appearing to accept the idea that they were not eligible for the medal, and generally they proved to be a little less grasping for decorations than Birdwood assumed and seemed to hold a view that they did not want an award with which their British comrades could not be issued. Certainly the whole scheme did little to aid recruiting in Australia or to increase the soldiers' vote for conscription, and it was ignored.[1]

Since Australia had rejected the introduction of conscription, the AIF had to find other means of maintaining its forces in the field. One partial solution was that which has been mentioned in the previous chapter, the removal of as many 'A' class men as possible from Britain. Great efforts were now made to send any fit men to France as quickly as possible and it

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1 H.J. Creedy to Members of the Army Council, 17 November 1917, W.O. 32/4985, PRO; Minutes War Cabinet Meeting 487, 16 October 1918, pp 35-36 CAB 23/8 PRO; Walter Long to all Dominions, 16 October 1918, RG 9- III A 2, vol; 352, NAC; Birdwood to Pearce, 12 March 1918, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 237 AWM.

became a feature of the bases and depots in Britain that they had regular 'comb-outs' to find any fit men to post to France after they had been replaced by 'B' and 'C' class men. There was a resultant loss in efficiency in using unfit men for tasks in Britain but the AIF minimised this by using women to perform as many functions as possible, especially the many clerical tasks at the headquarters.[1]

These methods were simply palliative and they did not solve the problem of units becoming too small to perform their battlefield functions. In 1918 the AIF followed the British example and introduced a controversial change to its organisation to alleviate the manpower problem by disbanding battalions. In January 1918, the British began to reduce from twelve to nine the number of battalions in a division, disbanding the most severely depleted battalions in the division and transferred the men in them to the other units. It was a move that recognised the realities of the manpower shortages and which was made possible by the increase in platoon firepower, through such weapons as the Lewis Gun. Although the British had known for a year that the change would be necessary, they only reluctantly adopted it on 10 January 1918 while the Australians accepted the principle even more reluctantly a few months later.[2]

Seeing the new British organisation, Birdwood expected the AIF to make the same changes. He first told Pearce this on 18 January, but a few days later wrote that low casualties and sickness evacuations over the winter would enable him to delay reducing battalions 'until heavy fighting and its consequent casualties forced it upon' him. In a reply, Legge (in Australia and CGS) gave voice to his suspicions by asking if the move was necessary in the British Army or whether it was simply motivated by 'past practice' of the British copying 'rather slavishly' a move made by the Germans two years earlier. He also pointed out that this initiative was much easier for the British than for the Australians. In the British Army, a battalion was simply part of a regiment which had its own traditions and identity. Thus the British could move a battalion to a new division or men could be changed from battalion to battalion and neither move would cause a loss of the sense of tradition and of belonging to a settled group with its consequent benefit for morale. In contrast, in the AIF the battalion itself was

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1 Lieutenant C.L. Neville, *Ordnance (A.A.O.C.) London*, AWM 224, Ms 508, AWM.

2 Keith Grieves, *The Politics of Manpower, 1914-18* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 174; Perry, *Commonwealth Armies*, 26.

the source of tradition and morale. To eliminate any battalions would be 'a cause of great pain and discontent' in the AIF. The point was missed or ignored by Birdwood, and suggests perhaps that he did not really understand the men he commanded as well as he and Bean believed he did. Legge insisted that the decision to disband battalions was a policy decision and required consultation with Australia before being implemented.[1]

By May the AIF had suffered heavy casualties in resisting the German spring offensive, and Birdwood felt compelled to bring in the change. The divisions affected were the 3rd, which lost one battalion, and the 4th, which lost two battalions. Following Legge's suggestions, Birdwood did not nominally disband the battalions but instead allotted their numbers to training units in Britain, thus retaining to some extent the unit and its traditions. Each of the units disbanded was the 'junior' battalion of the brigade and this was probably significant in ensuring that the men, despite some initial indignation, accepted the change when its necessity was explained to them.[2]

The troops did not accept matters as easily in September 1918 when the AIF found that it had a further need to reduce the numbers of battalions. Casualties had been fairly high as the AIF played a prominent role in the defeat of the German Army in France. Monash (now commander of the Australian Corps) knew that he could no longer put off the inevitable, and on 23 September reluctantly ordered seven battalions disbanded. The troops in the affected battalions refused to disband, elected their own leaders from the ranks and tried to continue to exist as coherent units. They argued that the *esprit de corps* that they had built up demanded that they should remain as a viable fighting force. All battalions indicated a willingness to go into battle in their weakened state, and only one (the 60th) agreed to disband. Arguably, the men were successful in their actions since no-one was charged with mutiny and Monash, who treated the men with great sympathy, allowed them to participate in the storming of the Hindenburg Line under their own officers. On 12 October the 37th battalion, now reduced to 90 men, agreed to disband and the others followed suit. Since the last action of the AIF was fought on 4 October, the men probably agreed with Monash that this disbandment was 'the initial stage of our demobilization', and that the

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1 Birdwood to Pearce, 18 January 1918, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 26(a), AWM; Birdwood to Defence, 22 January 1918, MP 367, item 409/19/875, AA.

2 *Official History Vol. V*, 657-8

traditions of their battalion had been upheld with no loss of honour. This was a fitting end for one aspect of the administration of the AIF, manpower, which was not marked by the success achieved in other areas, although as noted already, in this case the AIF had less autonomy in setting and implementing policy.[1]

In comparing the Canadian efforts to maintain their forces, we find that their experience closely mirrored that of the Australians with several important exceptions. The one great difference between the two forces was the method adopted to gain recruits. Canadian efforts were quite different from those employed by the Australians and they encountered many problems occasioned by the actions of Sam Hughes. So unsatisfactory did they prove that eventually they had to be changed, and a system very similar to that used by Australia throughout the war was adopted in their place.

As with many of the issues dealt with by the administration of the CEF during the early years of the war, the whole question of recruitment and reinforcement of the force was plagued with problems that could be laid at the door of Sam Hughes. Pre-war planning was abandoned after war was declared and, as a result, in many ways the recruiting of the CEF and its initial training at Valcartier proved disastrous. Once the initial drafts had been sent overseas, the recruitment of reinforcements continued to present problems. One of the few Canadians who was Staff College trained in 1914 was later to describe it as 'inefficient, wasteful and expensive', mainly because Hughes had insisted that the force should be recruited into specific battalions by their commanding officers. These, typically, were friends of Hughes, usually militia officers who were prominent in Tory politics in their local districts. Because Hughes had many friends and owed debts of political patronage to numerous men, it was not uncommon for him to appoint two men to try to raise battalions from the one district, with a common result being that neither could raise a full-strength unit. In other areas there were simply not enough volunteers to form a full-strength battalion, and for these two reasons Canada continually sent to the CEF battalions which had been slow to form and/or which were under strength and under-trained. Two units serve as examples of this. The 110th (Perth) Battalion began forming in October 1915 but did not move to England for a

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1 *bid*, 937-40; Pedersen, *Monash*, 279-80, 291-2.

year where, because it was too under-strength to be sent to France, it was broken up in January 1917. Another, the 258th Battalion, embarked with a total of only 236 all ranks, again to be broken up in England. As can be inferred, the battalions raised in this manner were frequently broken up since the great need was to reinforce established units, not to create new ones. It was accurately described by a Canadian staff officer as being a 'pernicious system of recruiting good battalions and then breaking them up for reinforcements'.[1]

Despite this chaotic system, the CEF, like the AIF, was initially swamped with recruits and a second division was formed quickly and joined the 1st Division in France in mid-September 1915. In early December, faced with increased casualty rates and a growing demand for new formations, the British asked the Canadians if they could raise further troops to serve in the Middle East. The Canadians, who did not want to have units serve outside their own formations, rejected the suggestion. Instead they opted to form a third division in France. To do this they coalesced the two mounted rifle brigades into an infantry brigade and joined them with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, the Royal Canadian Regiment (which had been garrisoning Bermuda for the previous eleven months) and elements raised in Canada. This 'new' division, largely manned by experienced troops, joined its two sister formations in the line in March 1916. Finally, in August 1916, the 4th Division, which the CEF raised from drafts training in Britain, became the final Canadian division to fight in France.[2]

While this process continued, the system of recruitment instigated by Hughes caused great problems for the OMFC, of which the greatest was a surplus of officers in England. When the CEF broke up battalions in England and sent the men to France as drafts, it was rarely able to find employment for the officers since there was no demand for senior officers who had no experience of the Western Front, and little for junior officers because the Canadians, like the AIF, now preferred to promote men from

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1 James Sutherland Brown, *Type Written Memorandum on Militia Expansion 1914-18*, Papers of James Sutherland Brown, Queen's University Kingston, 15, 19; Perry *Commonwealth Armies*, 130-4;

2 Report, 'The Growth and Control of the Overseas Military Forces of Canada', RG 24, vol 1824, file GAO 5-42, NAC. Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force; Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1962), 110-13, 133-5; Brown *Militia Expansion*, 16-17.

the ranks. As a result, virtually all of the officers from the new battalions remained in England, where they formed a body of disgruntled unemployed men who spent much of their time carping about the administration in place and making its job much harder. As the numbers of these men grew, they became a great nuisance to the OMFC and caused Carson to complain to Hughes that 'you are piling officers on us at such an alarming rate that before we know where we are, we will be able to form up a battalion of nothing but reserve officers'. The problem was eased with junior officers because many accepted an offer to train as pilots, in such numbers eventually that 'close to a quarter' of the pilots in the RAF were Canadians, while Carson was able to employ another 305 officers by posting them off as surplus to units in July 1916. This still left many such junior and most senior officers unemployed, and in April 1917 a survey found that in Britain there were 637 Canadian officers, including one brigadier, four colonels and fifteen lieutenant colonels, not attached to any unit. After Hughes had been dismissed, a new system of recruitment was instigated by Ottawa. The government was prepared to arouse the ire of these often prominent men, and in May 1917 all officers senior to lieutenant were instructed either to revert to that rank or to return to Canada. Most of the older (and usually most influential) returned to Canada where they maintained their criticism but now often voiced it through Parliament and thus continued to cause difficulties for the OMFC.[1]

In September 1916, Hughes visited London and unilaterally announced that he would be able to form two more divisions complete with reserves. He believed that their preparation would be so extensive that the OMFC would be able to send them straight to France without further training, but conceded that until they were up to strength, they could be used as reliefs for the older battalions. The British were happy to accept these divisions, although Haig wanted them to finish their training in England not France. As it transpired, Hughes did not have the personal appeal that he believed he had and recruiting slowed down dramatically after April 1916. This and the heavy casualties of the Somme fighting caused the idea of forming new divisions to be abandoned for a time. The sacking

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1 Carson to Hughes, 28 October 1915, RG9 III, item A1, NAC; Carson to War Office, 6 July 1916, DAAG, Canadian Training Division to Department of Militia and Defence London, 11 April 1917, RG 9 III, item A1, NAC; Desmond Morton, 'The Canadian Military Experience in the First World War, 1914-18', in R.J.Q. Adams (ed),*The Great War, 1914-18: Essays on the Military, Political and Social History of the First World War* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 90.

of Hughes removed the main driving force behind the idea, the 6th Division was never formed, while the 5th division was not formed until January 1917, remained as a home defence formation in Britain and was broken up a year later to reinforce the established divisions.[1]

Hughes' dismissal led to great changes to the system of providing reinforcements for the men in the field. Freed of his abrasive defensiveness, people were able to analyse the system and to identify and correct its many faults. One of these was the poor system of medical examinations which had resulted in Canada sending many men to Britain who later had be sent home as unfit. This practice was not only expensive, but it also reduced the recruitment of fit men because if the complement of a contingent had been filled, men were rejected and told to return later, which they seldom did because they 'left feeling that they had offered their services once and that their obligations were ended'. Hughes' influence had also helped to reduce recruitment because of the impact in Canada of controversies over the Ross Rifle and other unsuitable equipment. After Hughes was sacked these problems were finally remedied. Although Hughes then became a very vocal critic of the organisation and equipment of the CEF, his efforts did little to hamper recruitment because he had lost much of his credibility, while the men of the CEF were happy with the new equipment.[2]

Probably the greatest attempt to eliminate the confusions in the system, and so to increase enlistments, was made by the Canadian Government in March 1917. Seeing that the system of recruiting by units was not working, the government introduced a more efficient variation which was modelled on Haldane's original concept of the British Territorial system but which was also very similar to that used by the AIF.[3] Men now simply enlisted for service overseas and were then posted to reserve battalions in England for training. In turn, these reserve battalions were tied to established battalions in France that were now formed on a provincial

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1 Sir William Robertson to Haig, 28 September 1916, 29 September 1916, Haig to Robertson, 1 October 1916, WO 158/21, PRO; Morton, 'Canadian Military Experience', 83; Perry, *Commonwealth Armies*, 132.

2 A.J.G.D. de Chastelain, 'The Canadian Contribution and the Conscription Crisis 1914-1918' (Honours Thesis, Dept. of History, The Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston, 1960), 45-8.

3 Under Haldane's system, men were supposed to remain in the unit they volunteered to join. In practice the British changed the rules so that a Territorial could be posted to a regular unit within his own corps: Peter Dennis, *The Territorial Army 1906 - 1940* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1987), 35-6.

basis. Thus men would still serve alongside men from their own area of the country but no units were sent out from Canada to be dismantled later in England. The hope was that this would increase group cohesion and encourage men to join now that they were sure that they would probably serve alongside men they knew. At the front this decision was not always a popular one, since it led to the break-up of established battalions which could no longer be maintained by the resources from their original area. Instead, these battalions were replaced by ones from areas in which recruiting was stronger. Although the decision was not popular (one battalion before dissolving erected a monument to itself with the inscription 'Raised by Patriotism, damned by Politics'), the men of the CEF accepted it without the problems which were experienced by the AIF in 1918.[1]

The changes made after the enforced departure of Hughes did little or nothing to increase enlistment and the Canadians, like the Australians, found that they could no longer maintain their force using only voluntary enlistment. The figures illustrate the problem. In January 1916 30,000 men enlisted, in January 1917 only 10,000 joined and in April 1917 the figure had dropped to 5,000 despite the great Canadian victory at Vimy Ridge. This decrease led the Minister of Militia in Canada in March 1917 to conclude that 'Voluntary enlistment had about reached its limit'. Borden agreed, and as a result the government decided that it had to introduce conscription; but it had learnt from the Australian example and decided it would fight a general election on the issue, rather than hold a plebiscite.[2]

The election was a bitter one. The organisation of the voting did involve a degree of difficulty for the OMFC, but people outside its control were responsible for most of this. A new law, the Wartime Elections Act, was passed to lay down the methods of conducting the election. Civilians voted on 17 December 1917; the soldiers voted over several weeks due to the needs of military duties, completing their voting on the same date. Two special features of the act aroused the ire of the Liberal Party opposition; one allowed any British citizen in the CEF to vote, and the other allowed voters who had no Canadian domicile to nominate a specific electorate for which

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1 Brown, *Militia Expansion*, 21-2.

2 Desmond Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics: Canada's Overseas Ministry in the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 128; Growth and Control of the O.M.F.C., RG 24, vol 1824, file GAO 5-42, NAC.

their vote would count. The chances for political skulduggery, especially under this latter clause, are as obvious now as they appeared to both Canadian political parties at the time. To its opponents, this clause presented a novel, but very effective, means of gerrymandering the vote, and that is how the Conservatives used it.[1]

Despite Perley's warning against using the military organisation to obtain votes for the Conservative Party, for fear that such an action would alienate the troops, politicians back in Canada, knowing that many officers in the CEF were skilled politicians, demanded that fifteen to twenty officers should be shipped back to Canada to help in the campaign. Besides those officers who returned to Canada, another group found in the election a chance to use their skills. This was the large pool of unemployed officers, again many with great political expertise, who now formed the 'reserve army' of the conservative electoral effort in Britain. Aided by Brigadier-General A.D. McRae, the Quartermaster-General at the Overseas Headquarters, these men managed a highly successful campaign for the Conservatives. Using a variety of ploys, ethical and unethical, they ensured that the CEF vote strongly supported the Conservative Party. One ploy similar to one used in both Australian plebiscites, involved the 5th Division (then based in England as a depot division), which was told that a Conservative victory would see it transferred to France, whereas if the Conservatives lost the Division would be broken up. More ethical were speeches by officers, led by Major General Turner, commander of the Canadian forces in Britain, which exhorted their listeners to vote for the Conservatives. Less ethically, some officers who were supporting the opposition were transferred to the front, where they could not take part in the campaign. The least ethical but most important tactic was the manner in which officers garnered support for 'their' candidates by getting men to agree to transfer their votes to electorates where they were most needed by the Conservatives.[2]

Not everyone was prepared to work as assiduously for a Conservative victory. Currie refused to take any part in the campaign despite his personal support for the issue, because he realised that some of the actions of the Conservatives were not ethical and he did not want to associate himself

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1 Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics*, 133-4.
2 Ibid, 137-45.

with them. The British Army also refused to take any part in the Canadian campaign and, in marked contrast to their attitude to the Australian plebiscite held at about the same time, refused to take the Canadians out of the line for the period of the election. Later, Haig congratulated the Canadians for the manner in which they had conducted their poll over a period of seventeen days 'without friction or dislocation of ordinary military duties'.[1]

The result of the election was an overwhelming victory for Borden. When the votes polled in Canada alone were counted, Borden won a majority of 45 in a House of Commons of 235. This clear victory enabled him to be magnanimous and to concede that irregularities had occurred in the voting in Europe, and to agree that in obvious cases of such irregularities, the vote should be set aside. In London and Paris, respectively, this resulted in 13% and 16% of the CEF vote being discarded while in Ottawa 35% was discarded. Even when these votes were discarded, in marked contrast to the situation in the AIF in France and Belgium in the plebiscites, the soldiers voted solidly for the government; their votes won a further fourteen seats for the Conservatives and guaranteed that conscription was introduced.[2]

Despite the victory, numbers of reinforcements for the CEF did not increase to any great extent. The new Military Service Act, which came into force in October 1917, allowed potential recruits to claim exemptions for a number of reasons and large numbers did so, to the extent that in November 1917 20,000 men reported for duty but 310,000 claimed exemptions. By the end of July 1918, the law had been challenged in court, had led to riots in Quebec and had been evaded by large numbers of men. As a result, it had brought far fewer men to the CEF than the government had hoped. After July 1918 the law was enforced more tightly, but of the 400,000 men who registered (and not all eligible men did so), only 121,000 actually joined the CEF and it is unlikely that a majority of them saw combat.[3]

Even before the new law was introduced, the Canadians followed a similar path to the Australians and tried to replace A class men holding jobs

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1 Ibid, 144-5; Haig to the Secretary War Office, 10 January 1918, Borden Papers, reel C4320, no. 41186, NAC.
2 Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics*, 133-4.
3 Perry, *Commonwealth Armies*, 135-6.

in Britain with B and C class men. After the system of replacements had been reorganised, greater efforts were made to replace these men and in January and February 1917 the OMFC was able to release 1,319 officers and 3,579 men for service at the front. To aid the process of selection, the Overseas Ministry established a Travelling Board that held frequent comb-outs of the bases and forestry troops in England to replace A class men with B and C class wherever possible. None of these methods were enough to maintain numbers, and in 1918 the Ministry disbanded the 5th Division to use it as replacement drafts and in doing so created a further surplus of over 450 officers who either had to return to Canada or revert to the ranks.[1]

One solution to the problem of maintaining their force which the Canadians refused to adopt was to reduce the number of battalions in the divisions. The suggestion had been mooted early in 1918, but Currie had argued strongly against the idea, claiming that the British planned to replace the disbanded battalions with an American battalion, something he opposed strongly. He further argued that the new scheme would involve an unnecessary reorganisation given that the CEF 'had proved itself to be an effective and smoothly working fighting machine.' He proposed as an alternative that the CEF should use the surplus men in England (and in April, there were still 98,700 Canadian troops in England) to increase the strength of the existing battalions.[2]

Despite Currie's views, Sir Henry Wilson, the CIGS, wrote to Kemp (then Overseas Minister) in June to urge the idea once again on the Canadians and to ask that they use the men saved to enable the CEF to field another division in France even as a temporary measure. Once again Currie refused to agree. His troops objected to the idea of any more battalions being disbanded and he did not want the cohesion of his force impaired. Instead, he followed his earlier suggestion and used men from the now defunct 5th Division to build up each of the remaining divisions to an establishment of 21,000, compared to 16,000 in the British divisions. The numerical

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1 Kemp to Borden, 24 February 1918, Borden Papers, reel C4329, NAC; Report by Adjutant General, Turner Papers, MG 30, item E46, vol 3, File 18, NAC.

2 Brown, *Militia Expansion*, 24; Lt Gen A. W. Currie to The Overseas Minister of Militia, 7 February 1918, Private Papers of REW Turner, MG 30 E46, vol. 8, file 54; Borden papers, reel C 4415, NAC;

superiority of the Canadian divisions undoubtedly played an important part in the great success enjoyed by the CEF in the '100 Days' in 1918.[1]

Once again, the war had presented similar problems to the two dominion forces, and they had attacked them in similar ways, once the Canadians were able to remove Sam Hughes' influence. The maintenance of numbers was a problem which, in the main, had to be dealt with in the home country but it also presented problems which had to be handled in Britain or on the Western Front. As in equipping the forces, these were broad questions in which policy was largely determined by the home government after consultation with Britain and the services overseas provided an administrative framework for the implementation of policy while successfully fitting this into the British systems.

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1 Wilson to Kemp, 12 June 1918, WO 106/430, PRO; Morton, 'Canadian Military Experience', 90; Perry, *Commonwealth Armies*, 133.

Chapter 7

Administration on the Personal Level

So far we have dealt with the administration of the two forces on the 'large scale' — ie their relations with the British and home governments and the way(s) in which they used these relations to build up, equip and maintain the two forces. Much of this was above the reckoning of the average soldier and, similarly the population of their home countries showed equal disregard for these issues on the whole. What was and, in many cases still is, seen as important for both was that part of the administration which dealt directly with the troops and their welfare.

The scope of this section is enormous as virtually anything other than strategy of campaigns (and the British High Command decided that at a level higher than the commands of the AIF and CEF), tactics used in campaigns and the actual performance of the troops in carrying out the tactics comes into the ambit of the administration of the forces. For a variety of reasons, this work will treat some matters to a greater extent than others. The whole topic of the administration of the medical service of the AIF is a major one in itself, and is being dealt with elsewhere by other researchers, but still deserves some treatment because of its administrative aspects. This work then, will discuss the manner medical administration of the AIF organised its battlefield functions and its dealings with the central administration. Similarly, the discipline of the AIF deserves special emphasis but again only in passing and then only as it affected the administrative headquarters and the main figures in the administration of the AIF[1].

On the battlefield, the greatest concern for the troops was that the administration should supply food, ammunition and equipment as and when they needed it and provide for their wounded to be treated. Although some would argue that these are more tactical requirements, these 'Q' matters are such a crucial aspect of military administration that a separate chapter treats this topic.

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[1] Discipline in the AIF is treated in passing in Chris Pugsley, *On the Fringe of Hell: New Zealanders and Military Discipline in the First World War* (Auckland: Hodder & Stoughton 1991).

Within the areas covered by the 'A' branch of the AIF, there are still many matters this work needs to discuss. The methods used for the selection and promotion of officers is worthy of note as is the training given to the new officers and staff officers. The troops themselves were probably most interested in the manner in which the administration looked after their well-being on and off the battlefield. Some of this was outside the scope of the AIF: for instance, the British High Command decided the time spent in or out of the trenches and only strong representations from Australians could influence this. Largely outside the scope of control by the AIF was the leave units were allowed to allocate to individuals as this was again a question that the BEF decided but Australia did have some influence here, especially in 1918.

Once the troops came off the battlefield, they needed accommodation, training and recreation to be organised and leave to be allocated. Both the BEF and the AIF supplied these needs at various levels. The headquarters of the BEF allocated training areas but the unit allocated the actual billets. Following orders from Birdwood and his staff, divisional headquarters organised training but individual units devised modifications and timetables to suit their own needs and desires. Clearly the question of training has both a tactical aspect (ie what tactical methods did the HQ of the BEF require to be taught) and an administrative aspect, such as when and where to train and how to vary this training. It is the latter that concerns us. When the men were out of the line, the AIF could give them leave or post them to special training, and it arranged for them to be deloused and to bathe and get clean clothing. It was at this time that the AIF usually posted men to Officer Training Units and Schools of Instruction and arranged matters such as dental treatment. Finally, the BEF and hence the AIF increasingly came to see that this was a time to boost the morale of the men, and by 1917 arrangements were made for units to play sports and form teams to take part in sporting contests against other units and formations. It is these latter aspects of the administration of the AIF which this chapter will treat.

Training

Training of troops is one of the most important non-combat functions of an army. It has both a tactical and administrative aspect. The techniques the soldiers were taught are obviously strongly tactical and are,

therefore, outside the ambit of this work, which will treat the manner in which training was organised. In France, the methods to be taught to an extent were given to divisions by GHQ, and as time went by these were formalised in manuals which laid down systems of training, including general policies, principles, syllabuses and broad organisation, although there was no really coherent policy until 1918. A manual issued in January 1918 stated that 'Commanders of formations are responsible for the efficiency of the units under their immediate command' and that they were 'responsible for the training of all officers, N.C.O.s. and men in their units'. Clearly this policy gave the AIF some autonomy, while demanding that it maintain standards acceptable to GHQ. Both for quality of training and standardisation of methods between units and formations and for most of the war, training was the responsibility of the unit. GHQ accepted that schools would have to carry out special and technical training but all else had to be carried out by the commanders of units.[1]

The methods of training were usually devised at corps level while timetables were chosen at battalion level to fit into broad timetables allocated by GHQ. Because this was largely a tactical function, and therefore a 'G' responsibility, it will not be discussed other than to identify the manner in which unit training fitted into the administration of the AIF as whole. What is important is the manner in which troops were trained before leaving for their combat units and the manner in which the AIF, and later the CEF, developed a system that worked best to develop unit loyalty from the time men arrived at their first overseas destination.

When the AIF arrived in Egypt in 1914, it embarked on an intensive program of training to ready itself for the move to France (as it supposed). A great deal of this was devoted to musketry, marching and sub-unit work. The program was laid down at brigade level and, although it was supervised by the corps staff, there was great diversity in programs between units. The training given was also greatly at variance with the type of fighting in which the men were soon to be involved. In late 1914 and early 1915 tactics and methods were still fluid in France, but GHQ had seen the change from mobile warfare to trench warfare which was one of the reasons for the

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[1] General Staff, *Instructions for the Training of the British Armies in France. Revised Edition* (OB/1146. 40/WO/5673, January 1918), 5; Martin Samuels, *Command or Control?: Command, Training and Tactics in the British and German Armies, 1888-1918* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 121.

Gallipoli campaign. It is not unreasonable to suppose that they should have sent instructions that troops should be given some training in digging and assaulting and defending trenches, erecting barbed wire and trench-life in general. Instead, as Bean states, 'Little advice came from the Western Front. The Australian and New Zealand officers had to rely almost entirely on themselves. They had not seen a bomb; they had scarcely heard of a periscope'. The emphasis remained on open warfare and manoeuvre and little practice was given in the construction and defence of trench systems. In some battalions this seems to have been accorded equal emphasis with horsemanship and only a little more than railway demolition. This was typical of all training at this time in which divisional commanders were normally given freedom to train their own formations, even to the stage that senior commanders refrained from pointing out errors.[1]

Before the landing on the Gallipoli peninsula the AIF was given little chance to train for amphibious landings, other than some practice at Lemnos on disembarking from their transports. This only lasted a few days and was really only intended to teach the troops how to climb down into the ships' boats safely and then to row to shore. Because there were no real landing craft, there was little else that could be done. From Lemnos, the AIF sailed to Gallipoli and the landing while, at the same time, half-trained men were already being sent to Egypt as reinforcements to replace the inevitable casualties.[2]

Initial casualties in the campaign were heavy, and the need to train the new men to reinforce them became urgent. Against Sellheim's wishes, the British appointed one of their own officers, Major General Spens (a sixty-two year old regular officer), to be in charge of this training, much of it to be conducted by British NCOs, whom Bean believed would maintain stricter discipline, which would be needed if the AIF was to be trained thoroughly enough. Bean also believed that Kitchener possibly appointed Spens because he did not trust the quality of the training under 'colonial instructors'. This seems likely because Birdwood had written to Kitchener's private secretary in February giving a very damning opinion of the

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1 Godley to Allen, 27 December 1914, Pers 2 Allen Papers NANZ; C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume I* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1921) 125-39; Brigade training plans, AWM 25, items 941/3/877; 941/18, AWM, Samuels, *Command or Control*, 121.

2 *Official History Vol I*, 223; C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume II* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1924), 162

Australian training, saying that the NCOs did not know 'how to train or what to teach'.[1]

If the British wanted their regulars to take charge and to discipline the Australians it did not work. When men arrived from Australia in formed units, their own officers trained them; British NCOs trained only those who arrived as drafts for established units fighting on the Peninsula. According to Bean, the formed units were well disciplined and well trained whereas the men trained by the British often were given 'perfunctory' training and their discipline suffered, leading to many complaints about the behaviour of the Australians in Egypt at this time. If one does not discount this as being typical AIF 'British bashing', it seems that the formed units were far easier to discipline, while asking British NCOs to train and discipline men who probably resented them and their methods was to give them a near impossible task.[2]

Spens stated (quite understandably) that the training of the men was very dependent upon the training they had received in Australia, and this varied considerably. Some appear to have been trained quite well but the average was not good, especially as the time spent in training varied considerably. Some men had received six to seven months' training, others only two to three weeks. Because of this disparity, the amount of shooting they had done varied also. Few had fired a complete musketry course of 75 rounds, while some had shot as many as 200 rounds on the range; the average was only 30 to 40. Spens was also unimpressed with the quality of the Australian officers: those who came in the drafts mostly were very young and inexperienced in training and those who were sent to him from Gallipoli were, as he said, 'certainly not selected for efficiency'. The quality of officers sent to them was a perennial complaint of those running training camps, but the AIF tended to send low quality officers to Spens given the high officer casualty rates on Gallipoli. These problems were compounded by such a demand for replacements that often they were sent to Gallipoli only half trained, to the extent that the AIF had to build a miniature firing

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1 Notes designed for General Birdwood from Sellheim, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, Item 255, AWM; *Official History Vol. II* , 162; Birdwood to Fitzgerald, 2 February. 1915, Kitchener Papers PRO 30/57, item 61, PRO.

2 *Official History Vol II*, 162.

range off Shrapnel Gully only about 500 metres behind the front line to improve their musketry.[1]

In training the troops, Spens instituted a system that proved so satisfactory that it remained AIF practice for the rest of the war and was later adopted by the CEF. By September 1915, the numbers of reinforcements had increased to such an extent that he could form seven training battalions. Each of these he then designated to act as a source for one of each of the seven brigades then forming the AIF. This system had many advantages, but most especially, it immediately reinforced the regional character of the brigades and instilled in the recruits a pride in their formation and reinforced morale, since the men knew they would go together to the same brigade after training. Spens' system of tying training brigades to serving divisions was continued until 1918 when the number of reinforcements reaching Britain was too small to warrant it and the five training formations were reduced to three plus another into which men returning to France after recovering from wounds, attending officer cadet schools, etc were placed to be 'hardened'. Spens performed reasonably well given his great difficulties, but by 1916 Birdwood and Godley wanted training to be under the command of Australians. They had a number of officers whom they could appoint to the position, not the least because they no longer wanted them to command in the field, so Spens was not retained when the training camps transferred to Britain.[2]

Birdwood's immediate concern in early 1916 was the forming of the new divisions and their transfer to France. However, he took time to organise a training system which he placed under the control of Colonel R. Spencer Browne aided by Colonel J. Burston, both of whom had proved to be too old to stand the rigours of campaigning. He then headed to France and England where, amongst other things, he argued for the transfer of all Australian training from Egypt to Britain, against the continued objections of Maxwell (who wanted the Australian recruits to be available for the defence of Egypt if necessary). To further his idea, over Australian objections, Maxwell appointed a new British staff to control Australian

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1 Major General J. Spens, 'Report on the Training and Administration of the Australian and New Zealand Training Depot for the Six Months From 19th April to 19th October 1915', Allen Papers, Pers 7, item D1/114, NANZ.

2 White to Bean, 14 August 1925, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 255, AWM; Diary entry January 1918, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 96, AWM.

training and transferred the Australian depots closer to Cairo to form part of the defence of the city, probably believing that with reduced numbers, and under British officers, the Australians would no longer cause discipline problems in Cairo. Maxwell's scheme was never really put into operation as on 29 April the War Office ordered him to send the Australian Headquarters to Britain to be followed by the training depots when camps were ready for them. Thus ended the only serious attempt to place the training of the Australians under British control.[1]

Brigadier General Newton Moore was then in command of the Australian training depots in Britain, charged with training and 'hardening' men returning to service from hospital. After some thought, Birdwood decided to keep Newton Moore as overall commander of the depots and had him select camps for the training depots and to train the 3rd Division, which was to be formed and given its final training in England. In all, the Australians took over six camps, with a total capacity of more than 34,000 men, all established on Salisbury Plain in southern England. Initially, the troops were mainly accommodated in tents which were replaced by huts by the time the weather began to worsen with the onset of winter. These camps gave general training, and men were sent for specialist training in centres spread widely over Britain for such things as machine gunnery, bombing and engineering.[2]

The great problem with implementing effective training was the need to get qualified instructors. This was often difficult because formation commanders did not want to lose their best NCOs and officers, especially as much of the most useful training was carried out behind the lines in France. In this, they were supported by the officers who feared a training school posting, both because it could cost them opportunities for promotion that could only come with combat and because they believed such a posting could be a form of 'Stellenbosching' (a Boer War term deriving from the practice of removing incompetent officers to the town of Stellenbosch). Birdwood and Godley had recognised this problem in Egypt and on 3 May 1916 the latter had ordered that any officers posted to a training unit should not be passed over for promotion in their units and that they should be retained in the training camps for at least six months. This order did not

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1 *Official History Vol II*, 810; Maxwell to GHQ, London, 7 & 10 May 1916, AWM 45, item 30/2, AWM; White to Bean, 14 August 1925, Bean papers, 3 DRL 606, item 255, AWM.

2 'Report on the Administration of AIF Depots in the UK 1916-17', Mss 556-557, AWM.

settle the problem and Birdwood complained in November of that year that he was still finding COs who were sending their worst officers to the training camps. To counter this, in June 1917 he recommended that captains sent to training camps should be appointed for six months and that they should be entitled to promotion to major (presumably to compensate them for opportunities lost because of the transfer). Ironically the Australian government had already followed exactly the course he deprecated when, against Birdwood's recommendation, it 'stellenbosched' McCay by appointing him to replace Moore.[1]

One suspects that the Australian government had not enjoyed having McCay in Australia when he returned home in 1915 to recover from his broken leg, and even more it did not want him back home to create problems if he was returned to Australia as an obviously failed commander. This may be the reason that this unpopular officer was placed in charge of training for the rest of the war. There is no doubt that he was an able officer, albeit that his performance in France had not reached the highest levels, and he supervised training competently while still taking every chance to intrigue for promotion and greater power.

Anderson created a small disturbance in November 1916 by suggesting that the Australian troops should get the bulk of their training in Australia under experienced soldiers returned from the front. He argued that this would ease the congestion in the British training camps and would solve the problems of training in the English winter. The Australian government rejected the idea, despite some support from Birdwood. It saw that it was better to train men in Britain where instructors had recent experience of British and German methods at the front and the latest

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1 C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume III* (reprinted, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982), 165; Report, AWM 25, Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground, the British Army, the Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare 1900-1918* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 13; item 327/1, AWM; Birdwood to Pearce 30 November 1916, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 26(b), AWM; C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume IV* (reprinted, St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982), 24; Birdwood to Munro Ferguson, 31 December 1916, Pearce to Birdwood, 20 January 1917, Birdwood Papers, AWM 3376, item 30, AWM; Birdwood to Pearce, 2 April 1917, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 237, AWM.

weapons and equipment were available, which was not the case in Australia.[1]

The quality and length of training undertaken by recruits before they left Australia was a continuing problem, and the subject of regular complaints. The British had stipulated that all men should receive fourteen weeks' training before they left Britain for France. Although in 1918, Haig believed that this was inadequate and that men actually needed 36 weeks training in Britain and 24 in France, demand for men was too high to permit this. There was a problem of how much training in Australia should count towards the training schedule, especially since some men had waited much longer in camps than others while a ship-load of men was gathered to send to Europe.[2]

Once they arrived in Britain, the reinforcements were assessed and graded, and in late 1916 most were judged to have reached about equivalent to three weeks' training on the British standard. The quality of this Australian training was queried by a number of commanders, notably Monash when he was training the 3rd Division. In early November 1916, Australian newspapers reported that he had claimed that the soldiers in his division had to 'unlearn much' because Australian training was defective. Monash later explained that this was a misunderstanding of a reply he had given to a reporter, that the men from Australia had much to learn when they came over because many weapons (such as Mills bombs) were used in the trenches but were not available in Australia. In fact, he was quite happy with the basics that had been taught in Australia, except where training units taught out-dated methods in bayonet fighting. To correct this, he recommended that instructors qualified in this area should be sent back to Australia. Others were more critical of Australian training, and McCay later claimed that, despite the information sent back, men with three months' training in Australia were still only reaching a standard equivalent to three weeks' training in Britain.[3]

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1 Anderson to Defence Department, 20 November 1916, AWM 25, item 99/18, AWM; Anderson to Defence Department, 29 November 1916, Anderson Papers, Dispatch 54, Pr 83/20, AWM.

2 Diary entry September/October, 1916, Bean Diaries, 3 DRL 606, item 60, AWM; Griffith, *Command or Control*, 121.

3 Diary entry September/October, 1916, Bean Diaries, 3 DRL 606, item 60, AWM; Monash to Anderson, 10 November 1916, B 539, file AIF 369/1/259, AA.

Except that it was McCay making the complaint, one would be tempted to suppose that there may have been some British prejudice against 'colonial' standards in their assessments of the new troops because identical complaints were made about the Canadians. In 1916 the average Canadian arriving in Britain was 'considered to be qualified only to begin the third week of recruit training laid down by the War Office', this despite the fact that most had spent seven or eight months training in Canada before being sent overseas. Either the British judged the dominion forces harshly or they were not doing enough to improve the standards of training outside Britain.[1]

In the camps in Britain, the men were given a great deal of physical training and route marching as well as close order drill and specialised training in bombing, gas drill, bayonet fighting and rifle shooting. As they progressed through the program, their work became more complex and included such things as entrenching and other night work, section and platoon exercises, and techniques of attack and mopping up. This changed slightly when, in 1917 GHQ devised a fourteen week program for training which emphasised that the training camps should concentrate on getting the men fit, on route marching and teaching drill, saluting and musketry. All more specialised skills would be taught in the units in France, especially since, as the GSO at a Canadian depot at Shorncliffe noted, the training depots could not keep up with the progress in branches of trench warfare at the time.[2]

When they had finished their course in Britain the men were sent to France to base training centres, with most going to the famous infantry centre at Etaples. Here all drafts had their efficiency tested and they were given some polish to their work until they were ordered to the front — a decision in which the Base Training Centre had no input. Normally a good draft would spend five days at the base, where they would have to pass tests in musketry, grenade instruction, bayonet fighting and anti-gas drills. They then spent the time waiting for their posting by practising drill, entrenching,

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1 'Administration, Quartering and Training in England', RG 24, Vol 1861, file 72, NAC.

2 Diary entry September./October 1916, Bean Diaries, 3 DRL 606, item 60, AWM; Training in the UK, AWM 25, item 947/40, AWM; 'Notes on the Training of reinforcements at Base Training Camps, 31 October 1916', AWM 25, item 947/839, AWM; Memorandum from Lt Col Skinner, GSO Shorncliffe, 24 January 1917, cited in letter from Col W.E. Thompson to the Political Secretary of the Department of Militia and Defence, 17 February. 1917, reel C4322, Borden Papers, MG 26, H1(a), vol 163, NAC.

wiring and skirmishing, and receiving lectures on discipline and care of health, especially on avoiding trench-foot. When they were sent to the line, it was a standing instruction that all billets in forward areas used by troops resting from the trenches should have training facilities nearby. Training was thus intended to be both constant and thorough.[1]

In France, perhaps even more than in the UK, what the men were taught was influenced by the British GHQ, and the syllabuses produced reflected both British (and French) innovations and what had been gleaned from captured German documents which were often translated and passed down to the units. In the Australian units, at least, the men were also trained to take on various roles within the platoon so that they could cover for the inevitable casualties in any attack.[2]

Soldiers in the AIF and the CEF had a great advantage in training in France because their divisions remained in settled corps, unlike the average British division which was rotated constantly from corps to corps. Griffith has shown 'that it was not unusual for a British corps to command 20 different divisions over the course of one year.' Given this, it was virtually impossible to give coherent training 'in the absence of an overall policy laid down by GHQ', and that 'training often received a low priority' because there was no time to determine each division's standard of training, nor to correct any defects which did become obvious. Because the Australians and Canadians remained as coherent formations, these were not problems and this may help to explain their great successes later in the war.[3]

Once on the continent, the men of the AIF spent a great deal of their time in training, in many cases far more time than they spent on any other activity. Some figures serve to illustrate this. The 21st Battalion (2nd Division) spent approximately 950 days in France and Belgium before the AIF disbanded it on 14 October 1918. In this time, the battalion spent 193 days in the front line during which time it took part in nine major attacks in which it suffered over 1,700 casualties. Compared to this, it spent 361 days in training and this figure fails to take into account time spent in small unit training and, of course, ignores the time spent training in Egypt (18

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1 General Staff, *Instructions for the Training of the British Armies in France. Revised Edition* (OB/1146. 40/WO/5673, January 1918), 24.
2 AWM, 213/1, file 8, Box 46
3 Griffith, *Command or Control*, 122.

December to 20 March) after the evacuation. The figure also ignores the constant process of posting individual men out of the battalion to attend training schools in a wide variety of specialist skills We could also consider that the large number of rest days (127) often contained elements of training as did the 78 days spent travelling, most often by route march, which was in itself viewed as a form of training in fitness and discipline. We can compare this battalion with a sample from each of the other divisions. The 13th Battalion (4th Division) spent 359 days training in Europe compared to 196 in the front line. The 1st Battalion (1st Division) was in the front line for 155 days and spent 334 in training; the 55th Battalion (5th Division) was 863 days in Europe, 242 in the front line and 257 training and the 44th Battalion (3rd Division) was 717 days in Europe, of which 198 were in the front line and 344 in training.[1]

One of the main functions of training was to rebuild the group skills of units and formations which had suffered devastating casualties. It is noticeable that as the war continued, troops spent more time in sporting activities and had more rest days. While there is no doubt that Fuller is correct to point out that much of training was repetitious and resented, by 1917 GHQ had made great improvements on what had happened in the past, especially by placing much greater importance on the concept of inter-unit sporting contests. The AIF recognised that the troops were getting tired by 1917, and tried to build morale through recreation as well as by making training more interesting. Training was often on a competitive basis and, later in the war, was accompanied by frequent football and cricket games, both intended to foster the group spirit so essential in battle. As such, even rest days in which the men played sports had an intended role in training troops for battle. This increased in the last two years of the war, and Bean noted the great amount of time spent in organised sports. One diarist thought that: 'The battalions are just like a lot of Oxford colleges in the October term — more keen on their football for the moment than on anything else in the world'. No doubt, as Fuller notes, this increase was common to the whole of the BEF and it reflects some growing understanding of the necessity of such morale-boosting as the war dragged on.[2]

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1 War Diaries of the 1st, 13th, 21st, 55th and 44th Battalions; AWM 4, 23/18; 23/30; 23/38; 23/72; 23/61, AWM.

2 Note from Lt Col A W Bridges, 2nd Division, 26 March 1917, AWM 25, file 115/6; C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume V* (reprinted, St

Australians seem to have been luckier than the British when they were given rest; Fuller states that, to the British soldier, the term rest 'became a joke'. In the British Army this was a time of 'endless parades, ceaseless polishings, burnishings and inspections'. This view is supported by S.P. Mackenzie, who states that 'during the war British troops were drilled and worked harder when out of the line than in any other belligerent army in order to maintain discipline'. Fuller notes that this was less common in the dominion forces, and his views are supported by the war diaries of Australian units surveyed. These show days devoted to training and days devoted to rest, with the latter rarely featuring any form of parade other than the regular church parades, except for the 55th battalion in 1917, which seems to have been called upon to attend a number of parades, including some that were on a competitive basis. This 'genuine' rest was important to formations which were finding it increasingly difficult to maintain themselves at full strength and owed less to a belief in the need for an imposed discipline. It shows also that while the British laid down the guidelines which insisted on mandatory rest, it was up to the individual formations and units to implement the policy as they felt best. Because they concentrated their training in settled corps, in areas common through both expeditionary forces, they also gave their troops enough recreation, in the last two years of the war, so they were fresh for the major attacks that they often spear-headed in these years.[1]

Postal Service

One of the greatest administrative functions of the AIF was the supply of mail to the troops. This was important because of the morale factor, and because the problems encountered by this section in the first few months of the war gave Hughes the excuse to send Murdoch to Egypt and Gallipoli as his personal emissary, with fateful consequences. Certainly this was one of the least successful areas of administration early in the war, and

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Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1983), 20; J.G. Fuller *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies 1914-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 78-9, 87-8.

1 J. G. Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies 1914-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 77-80; S.P. MacKenzie, 'Morale and the Cause: The Campaign to Shape the Outlook of Soldiers in the British Expeditionary force, 1914-18', *Canadian Journal of History* XXV, August 1990, 215-232, at 217; War Diary 55th Battalion, AWM 4, 23/72.

one which led to many well-deserved complaints. Typical of the administration of the AIF in all areas, these complaints were addressed successfully and the mail service became very efficient.

The importance of this function of the Australian administration cannot be over-emphasised. As Lindsell stated,

> The importance of regular delivery of letters to the troops cannot be urged too strongly, the feeling of isolation produced — particularly in overseas theatres of war — by non-receipt of letters has a very bad moral [sic] effect, while an efficient postal service providing regular communication between the soldier and his friends at home produces a feeling of confidence which goes far towards success in battle.

It is highly significant that the earliest and most vociferous complaints about the performance of the administration should come because of its failure to get the mail to the soldier from 'his friends at home'. As Keith Murdoch was later to write, 'men in the trenches would rather have letters than gold or choice food'.[1]

Initial mail deliveries were slow and Monash, who had sailed in November 1914, wrote to his family that he received no mail until 10 February 1915 and that there was a large backlog and much mail had gone astray, some even to England, and much had accumulated in Egypt. Others complained about the same problems and the situation became much worse after the Landing. In June, Monash complained that in his opinion all letters since the Landing had been held up indefinitely due to a breakdown in Army postal arrangements: 'in some cases letters, even official ones, have taken 30 - 35 days to get from Alexandria to here and vice-versa'. He also complained of thefts from registered letters and the non-arrival of parcels. It is clear that he was here voicing a complaint common to many of the men on Gallipoli.[2]

These complaints were repeated by the newspapers of the day and reached such a crescendo that in July Pearce felt obligated to do something

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1 Major W.G. Lindsell, 'Administrative Lessons of the Great War', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* LXXI, February to November 1926, 716; Murdoch to Pearce, 1 July 1915.

2 Monash to family, 10 February 1915, 27 June 1915, 30 June 1915, Monash Papers, 1884, vol 127, NLA.

about it. Acting on Keith Murdoch's own suggestion, he authorised the newspaperman, who was a friend of both Pearce and Hughes, to 'make enquiries when passing through Egypt with a view to furnishing me with a report' on the state of the postal services and the related problem of the difficulties that people in Australia were having in obtaining information about the wounded.[1]

Murdoch used the opportunity this mission gave him to seize a chance to visit Gallipoli and from that visit came the famous letter which had some influence on the cessation of the campaign, but after a month in Egypt and on the Peninsula he also wrote a long report for Pearce on the state of the postal services. He had already written to say that 'the mail question must be seriously faced, or it will become very serious indeed.' He further urged him to take the matter on himself and not to trust 'old Sellheim.'[2]

Murdoch's detailed report to Pearce was quite sympathetic to the military for the undoubted problems that it faced in getting mail to the troops. In trying to do this, there were long delays mainly because of the volume of mail and because the AIF had too few sorters and these men were not experienced enough at the task.[3]

The amount of mail sent to Egypt was always large and quickly grew much larger. It began at about 75 bags per week but by April 1915 this had increased to 200 bags, and by 12 August, the total of inward mail had increased to 1,163 bags per week; in one 29 day period in July and August the post office had to deal with a total of 8,973 bags of inward and outward mail. Initially the number of men allocated to handle this was totally inadequate. When the AIF left Australia, seven men in the divisional train handled general post office duties and only three of these had any general postal experience. By the time of the landings, it had employed only three extra men, and the quality of all mail sorters was variable since officers tended to divert to the mail service known problem soldiers.[4]

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1 Murdoch to Pearce, 1 July 1915, Trumble to Murdoch 2 July 1915, Pearce to General Officer Commander in Chief Egypt, 13 July 1915, MP 367, item 564/4/258, AA.
2 Murdoch to Pearce, 13 September 1915, Pearce Papers, A4719/1, item 1-50/9, AA.
3 'Murdoch Mail Report, MP 367, item 564/4/258, AA.
4 Ibid.

Once the AIF began to sustain casualties, the problems of the postal service were vastly increased. The arrangements for casualties in the campaign were hopelessly inadequate and medical staff were greatly overworked. One result of this was that they let the paperwork slip and frequently failed to fill in forms to notify the post office officials of the location of wounded men. The inevitable result was that men got lost in the system, as far as the postal service was concerned, and their mail was not delivered. Murdoch cited a number of cases to support his contention, such as that of Private W.J. Gowans who was wounded on 27 April and who by 19 August had received no mail 'since he left for the front in early April'. Previously he had received large consignments every mail.[1]

One of the great problems was undelivered parcels and there were several reasons for this ranging from mail being lost at sea to theft. Another reason was that troops developed the habit of simply opening and dividing up the contents of a parcel addressed to men who had left the unit for any reason. Most men knew and approved of this, but their relatives in Australia still complained when they heard that parcels had not been delivered.[2]

Following the receipt of Murdoch's report, Pearce moved quickly to solve the problems. Firstly, through the Governor General, he asked the British to take every precaution to stop pilfering from the mails when they were under British postal control. Then, in October, he made the most important change by appointing Captain C. Fisher to be in charge of the AIF postal service. Fisher was a postal officer with over twenty years' experience and he brought with him 40 experienced postal workers whose numbers were supplemented by 'B' class men already serving in Egypt. In January, Fisher was promoted to the rank of major and made DAPS AIF. He supervised the development of a system in which all details of the men were recorded on a card system which was up-dated when the men moved (if they filled in a form) or were wounded (in which case hospitals filled in the form).[3]

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1 Ibid.

2 Ibid, Despatch Number 9 AIF Intermediate Base Cairo to Pearce, 24 January 1916, B539, file AIF 112/2/441, AA.

3 Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 2 October 1915, CO 616/31; Sellheim to Headquarters ANZAC, 6 January 1916, Despatch, Sellheim to Minister of Defence 21 December 1915, AWM 25, item 99/16, AWM.

The system adopted went largely unchanged for the next three years. Some problems had developed because mail sorters in Australia were inexperienced in military terminology (confusing battalion with battery for instance), but this was largely overcome by the AIF appointing sergeant majors to each of the General Post Offices in Australia. Once the British transferred the bulk of the AIF to France, the Australian Base Post Office was shifted to London where clerks (increasingly female) kept the records as up to date as they could, and sorted the mail out into units, which the ABPO then sent it on to France. From there the mail was sent through formation headquarters to the field post office where it was again sorted and sent to billets or carried up to the front line by one of the nightly fatigue parties.[1]

For the rest of the war, the postal service appears to have worked reasonably efficiently. There were still complaints, of course, but this was inevitable given the large number of items being carried and the natural problems of wartime. An example shows the problem: in the month ending 31 August 1916 the ABPO in London handled a total of 861,000 letters, 875,000 papers, 88,774 parcels and 26, 632 registered articles; in all a total of 16,074 bags of mail was received and 28,627 dispatched. This was a time of heavy fighting on the Somme and 417,300 letters were not delivered. Clearly, with the Postal Service dealing with such numbers, there were bound to be some problems.[2]

In the next two months, Anderson wrote to Pearce and gave some of the reasons mail was delayed. One of the greatest problems was that men changed their address without filling in a change of address form with the ABPO; this was the reason that over 400,000 letters had been returned in August. Another frequent cause of this problem was that husbands would not reply to letters because they were in a VD hospital, and understandably did not want to disclose their whereabouts. At a time of major actions, mail would be delayed due to casualties, as in August 1916 when the ABPO accumulated 730,000 letters which had to be re-directed, but this was largely corrected when the fighting quietened down. In all, 90 per cent of the mail was correctly and 'expeditiously' delivered and only 3 per cent returned to Australia as undeliverable. Part of the reason for the low number of returns was that the AIF was the only force that attempted to trace the addresses of

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1 Murdoch Report.

2 Anderson to Pearce, Anderson to Dept of Defence, Despatch 35, 8 September 1916, Anderson Papers, PR 83/20, AWM.

men whose mail was not being delivered. Like other elements of the Australian administration, in the face of huge problems, the Postal Service had begun to work well and efficiently.[1]

Promotion and Staff Training

Promotion and the appointment of officers in the AIF was an area of higher administration in which the government shaped policy and, in the case of senior appointments, intervened directly. There are three areas of interest in this question: the manner in which senior officers were appointed to commands, the training and appointment of staff officers of various grades (included in these two is the process by which senior commanders and staff officers became almost exclusively Australian), and the policy followed in appointing and training junior officers.

From the beginning, the Australian government expressed its intention to promote Australians to the senior commands wherever possible and to make all promotions itself. In doing this it was prepared to accept the advice of Birdwood while maintaining the right to over-ride his choices. In turn, Birdwood continually stressed his desire to appoint Australians to the high commands, once stating that 'I think you know that in making recommendations for these, I constantly keep before me the idea that other things being equal, preference should and must be naturally given to Australian officers to command their own troops.' Despite stating this, early in the war he made a number of recommendations in which he preferred British officers to Australians. The main reason for this was the lack of experience and 'consistent and regular military training' of Australians when compared to the available British candidates, a definite factor at the time.[2]

In August 1915, Birdwood sent his ideas on promotion policy to Munro-Ferguson to pass on to the Australian government, proposing that he should be 'the central authority to co-ordinate all promotions of officers in the various Australian units.' At the time, the Australian divisions sent him all their promotions for his approval and he never interfered with

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1 Ibid, Anderson to Pearce, despatch 42, 19 October 1916, Anderson papers PR 83/20, AWM.

2 Cable, Defence to London, 24 August 1915, A 1608/1, X16/10/2, AA; Birdwood to Pearce, 24 March 1915, 3 DRL 3376, folder 26 (b), AWM; Pearce to Birdwood, 6 October 1916, Pearce papers, A4719, vol 12, AA.

those affecting junior officers. He agreed with a comment in a letter from Legge that promotions should usually be by unit up to the rank of major, but for higher ranks he wished to look to the claims of men from other units. It was shortly after this that he supplanted Legge in command of the administration of the AIF, and thereafter the government supported his ideas.[1]

There were several occasions on which the Australian government and Birdwood disagreed over the appointment of senior officers. The Australians usually tried to have Australians appointed, but were hampered in their choice by not being able to judge their ability in the field, and this led to their accepting Birdwood's judgement when he appointed some Englishmen for commands. In at least one case, the promotion of Legge to command the 1st Division, they over-rode his views leaving him to point out to the Prime Minister 'the serious nature of the responsibility incurred by forcing a divisional commander on a G.O.C. against the wishes of the latter'. Birdwood accepted Legge's competence but he argued that he was unpopular (he was probably influenced by White, who had a personal rivalry with him judging by some comments in White's letters to his wife) and that this was an important fact in an appointment. He continued:

> My Ministers, inured to Trades Unions and the political Caucus, do not seem to appreciate generally the value of the bon camaraderie in the field, and the Prime Minister was disposed to make light of 'popularity' as a wholly superfluous quality.[2]

One of the last occasions for such disagreement between Birdwood and Pearce was in March 1916 when Birdwood tried to appoint two ex-Indian Army officers (Brigadier-General H.V. Cox and Brigadier-General H.A. Lawrence) to command the two new divisions forming in Egypt. Significantly, the Australian government accepted Cox (because they were familiar with his work with Australians at Gallipoli) but not Lawrence because they did not believe that his record warranted his being chosen over an Australian. Despite Birdwood's protests, Lawrence was not appointed and the division was given to McCay instead.[3]

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1 Birdwood to Munro Ferguson, 31 August 1915, MP 367, file 474/20/426, AA.

2 Birdwood to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 28 May 1916, CO 616/24, PRO; White to wife, 23 February 1917, White Papers, Melbourne.

3 Birdwood to Pearce, 8 November 1915, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, folder 26 (b), AWM; OH III 45-6;

In time, a policy was developed by which Birdwood was free to appoint all officers up to and including the rank of colonel. Higher appointments were referred to Australia but the government followed Birdwood's recommendations. For promotion to the lower ranks, in theory, Birdwood's recommendations could be reversed by the Australian government, but in 1916 Griffith at AIF HQ informed the Canadians that this power 'never has been and never will be exercised'. His senior appointments do appear to bear out his statement that he only recommended British officers if no suitable Australian was available. Thus we can argue that Legge, when he stated that 'Birdwood is not altogether Australian in sympathy' and Monash, who following a phrase first used by Legge in 1910, wrote in 1915 that in matters of advancement, it was a case of 'no Australian need apply', were probably expressing some truth but allowing personal ambition to blind them to the reason for the policy. Birdwood emphasised on several occasions that such men had to realise that selection because of ability was the criteria for appointment to senior positions, not seniority, and this was something which disappointed officers sometimes refused to accept. Certainly, after 1916, no British officers were appointed from outside to command Australian divisions and although the British officer, Brigadier General E.G. Sinclair-Maclagan, was promoted to command the 4th Australian Division in August 1917, he had served in the AIF since its inception.[1]

When it came to appointing senior officers for their formations, the Canadians were little quicker than the Australians in eliminating British officers. Initially, Sam Hughes emphatically stated a desire to appoint Canadians to senior positions (seemingly, as often based on their relationship with him as on any grounds of merit), but he was not supported by Perley and Borden, who were usually persuaded by the British to let such appointments be determined by experience and proven ability rather than any other factor. Thus when Hughes argued vigorously to have Major General Sam Steele appointed as the commander of the 2nd Canadian Division in France, Borden accepted Kitchener's advice that Steele

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[1] Legge to Trumble, 23 January 1917, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 255, AWM; Birdwood to Munro Ferguson, 26 November 1915, Birdwood to Paton 22 May 1918, Birdwood Papers, 3DRL 3376, items 30, 16, AWM Monash to Pearce, 18 November 1915, Pearce papers, A4719, bundle 7, item 2, AA; Canadian HQ London to Borden, 15 September 1916, Borden Papers, reel C4314, NAC; *Official History Vol. IV*, 713.

was too old, at 66, and too inexperienced to be given such an appointment. The Canadians did, however, prevail upon the British to appoint a Canadian, telling Kitchener that they 'will concur with the appointment of any Canadian for the command of the Division if recommended by Sir John French and yourself'. Of possible Canadian candidates, the British preferred to appoint Brigadier General A.W. Currie (who was shortly afterwards given the 1st Canadian Division), but accepted Canada's preferred candidate, Brigadier General R.E.W. Turner.[1]

Later, subsequent to Canadian failures at the St Eloi craters, the British expressed their dissatisfaction with Turner who was in turn defended vigorously by Sam Hughes, who blamed Alderson for the failures. The result was another compromise in which both officers were transferred from their active commands. The Canadians did not insist on a Canadian to command the corps and instead agreed to the British nominee, Major General Sir Julian Byng, but when Byng left the Corps in June 1917 the Canadians insisted on Currie's appointment and thus the Canadian Corps was commanded by one of its own nationals long before the Australians were even formed into one corps.[2]

Similarly, the Canadians were quicker than the Australians to insist that only Canadians should command their divisions. In 1914 Alderson was given command of the 1st Canadian Division upon its formation and in February 1915 the Canadian government felt obliged to accept the appointment of a British ex-politician, J.E.B. Seely, as commander of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade despite its strenuous objections. This decision probably made Canada more determined to appoint its own nationals to senior commands because after this Borden declared that he would ensure, 'that the next Mounted Corps that goes from Canada is placed in command of one of our own men as Brigadier'. It seems that he kept his word in other areas also because the only British officer to be appointed to command a Canadian Division after this was Major General L.J Lipsett, who commanded the 3rd Canadian Division from June 1916 till September 1918, and his was a special case, because (like Sinclair-MacLagan in the AIF) he

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1 There are a series of letters on this subject during January to June 1915 between Kitchener, Borden, Hughes, Perley, Private Papers of AE Kemp, MG 27 II D9, vol 3, NAC, also Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57, number 57, PRO; Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, 112.

2 Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*,, 146-7; Series of letters in Borden Papers, April, May 1916, reel C 4229 NAC; Haig Diary, 17 and 21 April 1916, WO 256/7,9, PRO .

had been attached to the Canadian Permanent Force before the outbreak of the war and served with the CEF until just before his death in September 1918.[1]

In the case of the appointment of junior officers, Australia and Canada eventually followed a similar policy but, in this case, Australia led the way. When the AIF was formed all junior officers were appointed by their commanders. Most had been officers already: 99 were, or had been, professional soldiers, 435 were militia officers and 58 were officers in the compulsory training scheme which had been recently introduced. The policy of gaining rank by direct appointment changed in 1915, and increasingly promotion was from the ranks. This policy was instituted in January 1915 and was largely adhered to for the rest of the war. Obviously, officers had to be sent over with transports, but these were kept to a minimum of usually one for each seventy-five men and they had first to enlist in the ranks, unless they had trained at RMC. They would then be accepted by their units, but were carefully monitored initially to ensure that they were suitable to command.[2]

In a conversation with Bean in early 1916, White laid down his views on the AIF and the promotion policy it would follow with junior officers:

> the AIF is now really an army and not a series of separate corps or divisions. It has to be handled and developed on different principles because Australia is a different nation and although the British do not realise it, we have different ideas and to some extent a different character; yet we know that we have and that the British principles cannot be applied in the crude to Australians. That may seem abstract but the moment you get inexperienced British commanding officers administering Australian troops you find the differences. The system of promotion of officers, possibly the most important matter of all is entirely different. British COs haven't to scrutinise their ranks carefully all the time to pick out

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1 Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force,*, 40, 542; Lord Edmund Talbot to Lt Col Brinsley Fitzgerald, 14 February 1915, Private papers of Fitzgerald, IWM; Colonel A. Fortescue Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-1919: General Series Vol. I From the Outbreak of the War to the Formation of the Canadian Corps August 1914 — September 1915* (Ottawa: J. O. Patenaude, 1938), 53.

2 C. Coulthard-Clark, 'Duntroon and the First World War', lecture given at the AWM History Conference, 11-13 February 1982; *Official History Vol. l*, 48- 56; *Vol. ll* , 412; *Vol. lll* , 53-4.

> the best men for officers. Australian COs have to, it is a great part of their duty. A British CO may be asked to recommend candidates for commissions once in a while, if he does the candidate goes away to an officer school in England. Into a big pool as it were, from whence he issues as an officer for any regiment. He is of a set policy separated from his own regiment.
>
> With us we lose half the value of a grand set of young officers if we separate them from the regiment in which they were privates, or at any rate from the brigade. You want them with the CO who knew them and often with the men they knew. That is a concrete instance which the British don't realise . . . well for these reasons, we cannot pool our army with the British Army.[1]

Shortly before the evacuation Birdwood wrote to Pearce and emphasised that he was in accord with these views, and that men promoted from the ranks were better qualified than junior officers sent out with drafts because the latter had slight training and no experience. Although he preferred to fill all vacancies by promotion from the ranks, he had to modify his policy by May 1916 because he had now used all opportunities to promote from the ranks and had to hold positions vacant to be filled by officers returning after being wounded. This was now necessary because he had numbers of spare officers at Tel-el-Kebir who could not get jobs because brigadiers were promoting all their officers from the ranks. Given that the AIF was resting after Gallipoli, and had less urgency in its need to promote officers, he also announced that in future all new officers would be sent to training schools before being posted to units.[2]

While Birdwood was clear that all officers had to come from the ranks and that experience was the prime criterion for further promotion, this policy was definitely not followed in the formation of the 3rd Division. The division formed in Australia and all its junior officers and many of its senior officers were appointed from there. Officers of all ranks (except staff who were mainly British at the insistence of Birdwood and Godley) gained their positions even without experience. Not unnaturally, a number of officers serving in Egypt were highly disgruntled by this, but their protests

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1 Diary entry, 23 March 1916, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 40, AWM.

2 Birdwood to Pearce, 8 November 1915, and 19 May, 3 DRL 3376, folder 26(b), AWM; Godley to Birdwood, 1 May 1916, Godley Papers, WA 252/10, NANZ.

came to nothing. This was a glaring exception, however, to what was becoming the rule.[1]

The system of promoting almost exclusively from the ranks did have unfortunate consequences for men who had enrolled in Officers' Schools held at Duntroon (ie, not students who had passed through the normal RMC training but those who enrolled in special wartime courses) because graduates from there were not given commissions in France. Between August and December 1916, 103 men qualified but they had not been sent to France by January 1918, and a further 124 qualified officers had accumulated in Australia by January 1918. Defence called for them to be given jobs, but it is not certain if this was actually done before the end of the war because Birdwood indicated that he had enough officers and he did not even want officers returned to Australia as invalids to be returned to him, although he did indicate that he would 'continue to absorb the ordinary quota accompanying each draft.'[2]

Prior to January 1917 the officers promoted from the ranks (who, by 1917, had to be at least 23 years of age) were not posted back to the same unit. From that date the policy was reversed and, if possible, they were always posted back to their original battalion. This process of promotion from the ranks was formalised in August 1918 when orders required a monthly quota of 12 NCOs and men from each division, plus 15 from the artillery and 5 from the machine gun corps (a total of 80) to be recommended to receive three months training to be commissioned. This requirement was increased to 120 by September 1917 and to 150 by November of that year but was reduced in September 1918 to 60. If those selected came from France, the first month of their training was in that country and the remaining two months were at one of the cadet schools at Oxford or Cambridge. In all, a total of 3,270 Australians were posted to British cadet units, not all of whom carried on to commissions for a variety of reasons.[3]

The Canadians also ended up adopting a nearly absolute preference for finding their junior officers from the ranks but they were slower than

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1 Godley to Birdwood, 20 & 25 May 1916, Godley Papers, WA 252/10, NANZ.

2 Defence to Birdwood, 15 January 1918, Birdwood to Defence, 20 February, 1918, MP 367, file 409/19/875, AA.

3 Perley to Kemp 3 February 1917, RG 24, vol 2543, NAC; Birdwood to Wigram, 16 September 1916, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 39, AWM; 'History AB Section DAAG (B), DRL Mss 589, AWM; AWM 25, 138/1, AWM.

the Australians to adopt the policy. In 1915 they accepted that promotions of officers and the appointment of NCOs and men to commissions on the Western Front should be made by the Imperial authorities. They changed this slightly later in the year by stating that such appointments would be made at the recommendation of the GOC CEF without reference to Canada, but Hughes insisted that all appointments made in Britain should be dependant on his final approval. Such men could be sent to cadet school in England but this was not necessary. By 1918 the expressed policy was that officers would be supplied in the following order: firstly cadets commissioned in the field, then officer casualties (returning after recovery) and finally officers 'of suitable age and qualification who had not served in the field but who had secured written acceptance by the OC of the battalion in the field'.[1]

In August 1915 the practice of replacing officer casualties by promotion in the field was starting to cause problems as officers who had accompanied drafts began to accumulate in Britain. This soon developed into a major problem but the CEF, if anything, increased the rate of promotions in the field and by May 1916 this was the most common source of officers in the units and remained so until the end of the war. Those officers now languishing in Britain were given the choice of being posted to France as a private, enlisting as an officer in the RFC, or returning to Canada. The first two were the common choices and this helps to explain the large numbers of Canadians who ultimately served in the RFC.[2]

The third element of selection of officers is the question of promotion and training of staff officers. We have already noted that at the beginning of the war Australia and Canada were very short of men with staff training. This became a major problem because to administer and devise tactics in any large formation a trained staff was essential, but staff-trained officers were at a premium in the BEF because many of the comparatively few it had in 1914 had become casualties in the early months of the fighting. Because of the urgent demand, it was necessary to train staff officers to build up the

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1 Adjutant General to GOC Canadians 7 August 1915, RG 24, vol 1861, file 77, NAC; 'Promotion and Appointments', RG 24, vol 1861, file 77, NAC; Turner to Kemp, 21 May 1918, Private Papers, AE Kemp, MG 27 II D9, vol 157, NAC.

2 Carson to Alderson, 26 August 1915, RG 9 III A1, vol 34 file 8-1-87, NAC; Desmond Morton, 'The Canadian Military Experience in the First World War, 1914-18', in R.J.Q. Adams (ed), *The Great War, 1914-18: Essays on the Military, Political and Social History of the First World War* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 90.

numbers to the levels required in the dominions as well as in the British formations. In the dominion forces the issue took on another dimension because until each had sufficient local staff-trained men, British officers would fill many of the key positions in the force. This offended both those motivated by feelings of nationalism (such as Major General H.E. Elliott in the AIF and Sam Hughes in Canada), and those who saw the presence of the British officers as barriers to their own promotion.

Very early in the war then, dominion officers and, to a lesser extent, politicians, began to wage a campaign to obtain staff training for their own nationals and to eliminate British officers from their respective forces. One of the main hindrances to this campaign in the AIF was Birdwood, who appointed British officers on many occasions in the early years of the war mainly because Australians lacked training and experience but also to maintain the 'Imperial' nature of the armies of the empire. In this he was supported by White, who was keenly 'imperial' in his sentiments. Birdwood also hindered the process by not giving staff training to Australians so that they could be fit for promotion to positions on the corps staff.

White justified the appointment of British officers to minor staff positions by arguing that since Birdwood needed British officers for specialised staff positions in the corps, he was obligated to accept younger British officers to give them experience. He further stated that, far from favouring English officers, Birdwood would rather appoint an Australian, even if he was not as competent as a British officer who was available. White also made it clear that he agreed with Birdwood that Australia needed to have British officers on the staff of the corps, and that the War Office had to provide the staff and that it had nothing to do with Australia.[1]

Others were not so sure of Birdwood's policies. In a scathing letter written to Bean after the war, Elliott strongly criticised White over staff training. He claimed that both Birdwood and White followed a policy adopted in the British Army of refusing to train any but regular soldiers for 'G' jobs and restricting staff appointments for the new men to A&Q positions which were the ones unlikely to lead to the highest promotion positions. He argued that this was because later in the war they could not

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[1] Diary entry, 23 March 1916, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 40, AWM.

promote British officers onto the AIF staff and so refused to promote Australians onto British staffs, which naturally reduced the number of appointments overall that could be made. One could argue, of course, that this was the most efficient manner in which to use the abilities of the men concerned because it allowed men with business experience to move into areas of administration while those with military backgrounds could be used in those areas in which they had had extensive training before the war. This certainly better fits the sense of the statement by Phillip Gibbs, which Elliott quoted to back up his case: 'Owing largely to New Army brains the administration side of our war became efficient in its method and organisation, and the armies worked like clockwork machines'.[1]

In a number of letters (usually to prominent British figures), Birdwood gave some support to Elliott's criticisms by emphasising his attitude towards maintaining the Imperial nature of the staff of the AIF. In July 1916 he wrote to Godley about a suggestion that New Zealand staff officers should be shifted out of I ANZAC Corps to II ANZAC Corps because the New Zealand Division was now in the latter rather than the former. His view was that they should remain where they were because

> The corps staff is imperial, and as these men have been seconded, it would hardly seem necessary to return them for duty to their units anymore than it would be necessary for, say, Smythe or any Imperial man to be ordered off.

He seems to have believed that his views would be accepted by the majority of Australians because in September 1916 he wrote to Munro-Ferguson that 'neither do I think that there is much jealousy now between Australian and British officers', a sentiment with which Munro-Ferguson's Australian experience did not lead him agree, writing instead to Birdwood that, except for a few, 'there is an innate antipathy to the Home officer here'.[2]

Birdwood must have soon seen antipathy to the British grow during the Somme battles, which increased the Australian tendency to be critical and which probably fuelled a growing antagonism to the idea of the interchangeability of Australian and British staff officers, an essential for an

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1 Elliott to Bean, 10 June 1929, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 261, AWM; Phillip Gibbs, *The Realities of War* (London: Heinemann, 1920), 55.

2 Birdwood to Godley, 20 July 1916, WA 252/10 Godley Papers, NZNA; Birdwood to Munro-Ferguson, 5 September, 1916, Munro-Ferguson to Birdwood, 16 October 1916, Birdwood papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 30, AWM.

Imperial Army. This antagonism had grown to such an extent that Birdwood felt obliged to order all divisional commanders in April 1918 to stop Australian troops (both officers and men) from making disparaging comments about British troops. This antagonism had grown very strong over the previous eighteen months and made it difficult for the British and Birdwood to preserve the idea the Imperial staff.[1]

This reached a climax when the Australian government wrote to Birdwood telling him that the Imperial Government had been asked to concur in the idea that Australians should be constituted in purely Australian formations, with Australian commanders and Australian staffs, and asked him to furnish a list of Imperial officers in the AIF who could then be replaced by Australians because there were too many British officers in the AIF. Birdwood replied that he was in favour of the idea and indicated that he had been eliminating British officers from the AIF, but stated that the figures quoted were misleading because they included the staff of both Corps headquarters, 'which are not Australian organisations'. He would be able to retain British officers in these staffs, but in the divisions there were only 20 British staff officers, six of whom were to be withdrawn shortly. The Australian government replied ignoring the distinction and stating that Birdwood had shown that he had over 90 British officers on Australian staffs and instructed him to prepare a list of those he could remove immediately, and to prepare further proposals indicating what he intended to do about the others.[2]

Probably fearing the significance of these actions, the British Government now wrote to the Australian Government emphasising that it was willing to increase the number of Australian staff officers but that it wanted Australians to serve on British staffs and vice-versa, 'as they regard staff generally as an Imperial organisation in which officers of Dominion and British forces shall be considered interchangeable'. This had followed an internal memorandum in which the Army council informed the Colonial Office that the idea of removing British officers from Australian staffs would be regarded 'as a retrograde step and contrary to the whole spirit

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1 Birdwood to generals, 30 April 1918, 3 DRL 3376, item 17, AWM.

2 Defence to Birdwood, 4, 12 21 Aug. 1917 AWM 27 Birdwood to Defence, 12 Aug, 1917, AWM 27, items A 204 and 197, AWM; Defence to Birdwood, 4, Aug. 1917, AWM 27, item A 204, AWM; Army Council to Colonial Office, 6 Aug. 1917, AWM 45, item 27/34, AWM.

of Imperial policies as regards military organization, and one which they would strongly deprecate'.[1]

The Australian government immediately replied to this that it did not want Australian officers to be interchangeable and that they wanted the Australians to be grouped in one or more Australian Corps with Australian staffs. When the British indicated that they did not want to remove British officers from Australian staffs on the grounds that staffs operated on a system of interchangeability, the Australians countered that this had not been done and no Australians were serving on the staff of British formations. The British justified this because of the previous paucity of Australian officers with the necessary experience which, in the fourth year of the war, would no longer be a problem. Australia was not mollified, and replied that it wanted Australian formations under Australian commanders and staff because 'This would appeal most strongly to Australian national sentiment, the troops heartily desire it, the Commonwealth Government presses it'.[2]

Faced with such an emphatic expression of the Australian desire, the British capitulated after the conclusion of the Third Ypres campaign and agreed to form an Australian Corps of four divisions, with the Fourth Australian Division remaining as a depot division. At the same time, they tried to argue that staffs should be interchangeable and that the Australians had agreed to this when they agreed to the formation of the Imperial General Staff. They stated that they would only place a limited number of British officers on the staff of the AIF while giving a large number of Australians training on British staffs where they would be available for posting back to the AIF as needed but to no avail. This was despite Haig informing the War Office that Birdwood had already refused to post Australians to British formations on the grounds that until the AIF was completely staffed by Australians, any suitable officers had to stay with the Australians. From that time, the AIF moved quickly to replace British staff officers with Australians which, only a month later, led Birdwood's private

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1 Defence to Birdwood, 4 and 21 August 1917, Birdwood to Defence, 12 August, 1917, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Defence, 11 August, AWM 27, item A 204, AWM; Army Council to Colonial Office, 6 August 1917, AWM 45, item 27/34, AWM.

2 Munro-Ferguson to Secretary of State for the Colonies, September 1917; Secretary of State for the Colonies to Munro-Ferguson, 12 September;. M. L. Shepherd (secretary) to Official Secretary to the Governor-General to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 September 1917, AWM 27, item A 197, AWM.

secretary sadly to note in his diary that, 'All the British officers are fast disappearing from the Corps now'.[1]

There were two aspects to this question of staff appointments: the first was nationalist, but it was also caused by a general shortage of trained staff officers. In 1915 Birdwood had asked for some British staff officers but was informed that they were in short supply and it was suggested that he should train Australian and New Zealand officers for the role, something which he began slowly. By 1916 this shortage had become yet more pressing and the British tried to reduce it by instigating training programs. In October each infantry brigade was ordered to post on its staff a captain or lieutenant as a staff learner. Further, all corps were required to nominate one junior officer each month to attend a staff training course in the UK. This system was brought in to ensure that staff trainees received similar training in a situation in which the composition of armies changed frequently. By December, the AIF saw that this was not enough and ordered all divisions immediately to select five officers to start staff training and to have five under training at all times by being attached to staffs. To maintain control over this, AIF HQ ordered divisions to report monthly on what each of the trainees had done in the month and their suitability for the position.[2]

By 1917 because 'the supply of trained officers to fill first grade appointments (was) no longer equal to the demand', the BEF institutionalised both the training and appointment of staff officers. The first step on this particular ladder of promotion was that men were appointed as GSO(3) after having passed the Cambridge staff officers' course or having served as 'learners' on established staffs. Brigade Majors had to have been staff captains or GSO(3), although some were appointed following training in Cambridge. To prepare men for these steps, GHQ made it mandatory that each division should appoint a staff learner to a brigade staff for a month. For the more senior GS positions (GSO(1), AAG, AQMG, AA&QMG) it was preferred that they had attended the Cambridge course. In October 1917 each division was asked to send three men for the senior course and three for the junior course (GSO(2), DAAG, DAQMG,

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1 Secretary of State for the Colonies to Defence,13 November 1917, AWM 27, items A 197, 204, AWM; Haig to WO 19 Oct 1917 AWM 27, item A197; diary entry, 15 December 1917, Diary of Captain A.M. McGrigor, IWM.

2 GHQ to Birdwood 30 August 1915, AWM 27 item 207, AWM; HQ Corps to HQ divisions, 21 October 1916, B1535, file 929/1/61, AA; RG9-lll B-1, vol 1030, file T-22-3, vol-1 NAC; AIF Orders, 23 December 1916, , B1535, file 929/1/61, AA.

DAA&QMG, BM). In each case there would be two each from GS, artillery and administrative branches. By mid 1918, the Australian corps ordered that there be seven such men in training for staff appointments and interestingly specified that if possible, two of these should be graduates of RMC. The course lasted for six months; for the first three months officers would gain experience in GS and administrative work in the division and on the staff of a brigade. For the last three, they would carry out the work of the position as far as possible.[1]

The Canadian situation with staff officers was similar to the Australian. Despite their having instituted the system of giving staff training in Canada (the militia staff course), there is no evidence that this was considered grounds for promoting Canadian militia-trained staff officers to responsible positions on the staff of formations or units. Instead, early in the war no-one other than Sam Hughes (and he inconsistently) seemed to believe that any but British officers should handle GS duties on all staffs. This changed as the war continued and the Canadians pushed to have more men trained and given experience in staff duties, but right till 1918 the majority of Divisional GSO(1)s in the CEF were British, as was the BGGS of the corps. Again, like the Australians, the Canadians seemed to accept that their officers did not have the depth of training or the experience of the British staff officers (at least for these positions) and did not place them in these positions. Hughes wrote at least one intemperate letter in 1915 claiming that Canadians were better suited to staff positions than the British employed in them, but earlier he had indicated that he realised that this could not apply to the positions of DA&QMG or GSO(1).[2]

Thus even in early 1917 when Perley and Turner (then serving as General Officer Commanding Canadians in the United Kingdom) separately pushing to eliminate British staff officers from the CEF, both indicated that they accepted that the BGGS and GSO(1) had to be British. In this attitude, they recognised the situation in the corps where the BGGS, the DA&QMG, two GSO(2)s, a brigade major and a staff captain on the corps staff were all British, as were the GSO(1)s and GSO(2)s of all divisions and seven brigade majors. In the summer of 1917 there were 14 Canadian GS officers compared

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1 GHQ GOC 3rd Australian Division, 17 August 1917, AWM 25, 937/29; Australian Orders 26 June 1918, B1535, file 929/1/61, AA.

2 Lord Connaught to Haig, 15 December 1915, Haig diary, 30/57, number 56, PRO; Carson to Turner, 21 July 1915, RG III A1, vol 30, NAC.

to 12 Imperial officers and eight Canadian compared to 5 British Brigade Majors in the Corps. In contrast, there was only one British staff officer out of 19 in administrative positions, an indication of the extent to which the Canadians valued British training and experience in the more specialised areas. A Canadian memorandum of the time shows that despite four years of war the Canadians had not enough men serving as GSO(2)s to train them for the superior position. To overcome this, the Canadians attached officers to British formations (a policy advocated for the Australians, but not carried out). They clearly believed that the policy had worked because, by the end of the war, only one division had an Imperial GSO(1), although in the Corps HQ, the BGGS, GSO(1) and the DA&QMG were all British.[1]

Leave

As in many other areas of the administration of their forces, the Australians and the Canadians to a large extent accepted the leave policies dictated to them by the British, but they also incorporated some features of their own. They both took some opportunities to argue against British policy when they thought it was not in the interests of their nationals and they both had to make their own arrangements for their men when they were on leave. As well, they had to cope with a problem which emerged directly out of the soldiers taking leave: very high VD rates.

Strictly speaking, the British did not tell either dominion how much leave it could grant to its soldiers but it did restrict them on the basis of the amount of shipping which was available to transport the troops on leave to Britain. Thus in Egypt, before and after the Gallipoli campaign, the AIF gave its soldiers more leave than they did later in France but this was limited to Cairo and not enjoyed as much.

During the campaign itself, leave was impossible for many until the later stages when the AIF gave leave on Lemnos to many of those who had first landed on the Peninsula. This was not really satisfactory leave for the troops for a number of reasons. The main problem was the lack of recreational facilities and, although he enjoyed the rest, Monash was very scathing about the organisation on Lemnos. His brigade lacked tents, camp

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[1] Turner to Perley, 27 January 1917; Perley to the War Office, 17 February 1917; 'Memorandum on the Selection and Training of Staff Officers in France', May 1917, memorandum to GHQ, March 1917, Private Papers of REW Turner, MG 30, E46, vol 11, folio 79, NAC; Stacey, 'The Staff Officer' 25-6.

equipment and transport when they arrived and the lack of organisation during their whole stay led to his complaining about a plethora of matters, including poor accommodation, a confused chain of command, lack of canteen stores and slow mail deliveries. He commented to his wife that

> All this betokens lack of business management and power of co-ordinated action. — The fact is that the effort which the empire is being called upon to put forth is so severe that the best men naturally gravitate to the fighting front or the centres of munitions supply while all the subordinate and accessory services get into the hands of the mediocre men and the inefficients — 'dugouts' they call them — because they are men who have been retired from the service long ago and have been 'dugout' from their retirement.

In another context, he stated that the troops claimed that staff officers would have a battle clasp saying, 'Mudros, Imbros, Chaos'.[1]

Once the bulk of the AIF had transferred to France, a regular system of leave was instituted by the AIF for the benefit of the troops. Most were keen to visit Britain, especially the large number of early members of the AIF who were British by birth (perhaps 40%). Many had been granted 14 days' leave in Britain after they left British hospitals where they had recovered from wounds received at Gallipoli. They were joined now by thousands of others based in France, as well as by those who had just made the trip from Australia, since all reinforcements were given leave before they embarked for France after they had completed their training on Salisbury Plain.[2]

Birdwood began immediately to give the soldiers eight days' leave in Britain but, as Bean points out, it was almost a year before 'the Australian troops had worked through the roster of their first leave'. In May Birdwood was allowing one hundred men a day to go on eight days' leave but this number soon increased greatly, and by 1917 there were as many as 300 men per day calling in to the Australian Headquarters in London. In January 1918, this number had increased further still, because winter was a good time to grant leave since military activity was much less, and in this

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1 Monash to wife, 20 September 1915, 4 October 1915 and 1 January 1916; Monash Papers, 1884, Box 127, Vol 2, NLA.

2 E.M. Andrews, *The Anzac Illusion: Anglo-Australian Relations During World War One* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 151; Report by Richardson, number 16, Richardson Papers WA 231/10, NZNA.

particular winter the authorities were aware that chances to grant leave in the immediate future would be greatly reduced by the expected German offensive. Over this winter, the AIF had 4,000 men continuously in England on leave as well as others in Paris.[1]

Australian leave was for eight days initially but this was increased to ten days from late 1916, and to as much as thirty days for senior officers or staff officers suffering as a result of prolonged and constant service. Despite this, there was a constant Australian complaint that the British were given more leave than them, which appears to have been groundless. If we extrapolate from Bean's account that the Australians all received leave at least once a year, they had little cause for complaint because the British received much less. Fuller found that 'In June/July 1917, more than 107,000 British soldiers have had no leave for eighteen months' and over 400,000 none for twelve. The British soldiers were worse off but the British command saw that it would be advisable to give in to Australian demands when the complaints reached a crescendo in late 1916, because the AIF was about to vote in the first conscription plebiscite. As a result, Whigham, Deputy CGS, wrote to Kiggell, Chief of Staff of the BEF, on 18 November to suggest that as many Australians as possible should be given leave as this would encourage recruiting. Haig indicated that he had approved leave for 7,000 men a day from the BEF and that this number would be sufficient to guarantee all Australians would get British leave in the winter if the transport was sufficient. Not for the first or last time, the British were willing to be more than generous in accommodating the wishes of a dominion force.[2]

Soon after Anderson had arrived in Cairo he realised that he had to prevent the soldiers becoming too immersed in the vice of the City, and so established the AIF and War Chest Club in the Bourse Khedivial (the Cairo Stock Exchange). This was designed to provide the soldiers with good quality cheap food and 'decent' entertainment. The funds for its

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1 *Official History Vol. III*, 87; Birdwood to Allen, 6 May and 23 May 1916, Allen Papers, Pers 2/9, NZNA; Neville, Lt C. L., Ordnance (AAOC) London, AWM 224, Ms 508, AWM; Birdwood to Pearce, 18 January 1918; Pearce Papers, A4719, vol 12, AA.

2 Telegram Lord Novar to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 22 November 1916, CO 626/57 PRO; Confidential memo from Headquarters 3rd Army, AC/84/229, 18 November 1916, Private Papers Major Keith Officer, Section IX, 3 DRL 2924, AWM; Fuller, *Troop Morale*, 72; Whigham to Kiggell (CGS BEF), 18 November 1916, and Kiggell to Whigham, 22 November 1916, AWM 27, item A147, AWM.

establishment were provided by the Citizens' War Chest Club of New South Wales, and this organisation (through its parent organisation, the Australian Comforts Fund) gave the club its financial backing throughout its life. It was controlled by the AIF HQ but run by a staff of volunteer hostesses who were aided (eventually) by 35 NCOs and soldiers. The club was a great success in Cairo, and when Anderson and his headquarters moved to London, he took the concept with him.[1]

As soon as the Administrative Headquarters had been established in London, Anderson made arrangements to lease a site for a club at 97 Horseferry Road, almost opposite the Headquarters. When soldiers did get leave in England, they found the Administrative Headquarters and this club a haven and it soon found itself busy caring for the thousands of men who arrived to start their leave and established a number of subsections to cater for them. These included a kit store, a pay office, accommodation quarters, bathrooms, a buffet and an inquiry room, all of which served to help the soldiers enjoy their leave to the maximum.[2]

The aims of the club were to provide accommodation and entertainment and to 'attend to the social welfare of Australian soldiers passing through'. It gained help from the High Commissioner's office, which realised the need to give information to the soldiers on leave and set up the 'soldiers' inquiry room'. This was originally designed to provide simple services such as supplying information about trains in Britain, maps of the underground and where to stay on leave. However, it became apparent that more was required by the soldiers, and the Australian Natives Association supervised the establishment of a buffet in the school buildings adjoining the Australian Headquarters. Gradually more functions were added, notably extra dormitories, a larger buffet and wet and dry canteens. As before, the club was staffed by a mixture of military, voluntary (both Australian and British) and paid civilian labour.[3]

The Buffet was one of the first sections established and it concentrated on providing quickly prepared, cheap meals for men on leave. It had a

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1 Historical Record of the AIF and War Chest Club, AWM 224, Mss 568-576, AWM.

2 History of the Hospitality Section Administrative Headquarters, AIF, London, AWM, 1014-10-10, 04/53/91, AWM.

3 Historical Record of the AIF and War Chest Club, AWM 224, Mss 568-576, AWM; History of the Hospitality Section Administrative Headquarters, AIF, London, AWM, 1014-10-10, 04/53/91, AWM.

seating capacity of 250 and aimed at serving four sittings in an hour, preferably for a fixed menu that never cost more than a shilling per meal for the whole war. A typical menu shows the manner in which the buffet achieved its aims of giving good food cheaply.[1]

Breakfast
Porridge
Sausages, Egg and Potatoes
Sausages, Tomato and Potatoes
Poached Egg on Toast and Tomato
Fried Fish and Potatoes
Bacon and Egg
Cold Meat and Potatoes
Pickles Beetroot
Bread and Butter

Tea Coffee

Lunch
Vegetable Soup
Rump Steak Pie
Roast Lamb and Mint Sauce
Potatoes, Cabbage, and Haricot Beans
Cold Roast Beef and Mutton
Beetroot, Pickles
Golden Roll and Honey Sauce
Jam Tart
Rice Pudding
Bread
Tea or Coffee

Tea and Supper
Sausages, Egg and Potatoes
Sausages, Tomato and Potatoes
Poached Egg on Toast and Tomato
Fried Fish and Potatoes
Entree and Potatoes
Cold Meat and Potatoes
Pickles Beetroot
Stewed Fruit and Custard
Jam Tart
Blanc Mange
Ice Cream
Bread and Butter
Tea Coffee

In the 33 months that the buffet was in operation to 9 May 1919, it supplied nearly three and a half million such meals.[2]

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1 Historical Record of the AIF and War Chest Club.
2 Ibid.

The Dormitories were originally limited to supplying beds for 200 men but increasing demand from the soldiers led to AIF HQ acquiring more space until, by 1919, it supplied 11,160 beds or 10 per cent of the total bed accommodation for soldiers in the London district. The cost of building these dormitories and of supplying most of the beds and bedding was met by the Citizens War Chest Fund of Sydney. Bed and bath were provided in clean and hygienic surroundings at a cost of one shilling per night, and in its life the club gave overnight accommodation to over 650,000 soldiers.[1]

Born out of experiences in both Egypt and London, where many traders saw the wealth of the AIF soldier as a target for highly priced and often poor quality goods and services, the club provided other services. It sold tobacco, watches, souvenirs, postcards, repaired watches, gave haircuts and ran a wet canteen which sold good quality drinks at cheap prices in orderly and clean premises. The wet canteen was only open to soldiers in uniform and only operated in normal licensing hours. The club also maintained a bank, a post office, a Kit Store, a billiard lounge that was open from 9 am till 12 midnight, and a boot cleaning parlour.[2]

One of the main purposes of the club was to provide 'decent' entertainment for the troops and this it managed in conjunction with the Hospitality Section of the AIF HQ. To get men out of London, both to solve some of the difficulties of accommodation and to remove the men from the temptation of vice, in the spring of 1917 AIF HQ came up with the idea of arranging for English farmers to open their homes to Australian soldiers on leave. This idea was soon made practical and some 3,000 homes made themselves available to visits from Australians. According to the history of the Hospitality Section, 'probably no less than 10,000 men' were sent out to homes under this scheme, and a report stated that 'it is known that in very many cases men have gone to these homes a second or third time on their own initiative, and have taken other boys with them'. In addition to this scheme, the club arranged concerts, dances, movies, lectures and boxing and billiard tournaments at the club, and at AIF Hall which was established in the cinema hall in Australia House. In addition, men were taken on sight-seeing tours of London and its immediate vicinity (such as to the State Apartments at Windsor Castle, which were opened every Tuesday to

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.

overseas soldiers' visits) and to the theatre and other entertainments. In addition, during the war at least two concerts were given weekly at the club by artists who donated their talents free of charge.[1]

It can be seen that a great deal of effort was made to entertain the soldiers and to keep them out of trouble while they were on leave. This was not, of itself, always sufficient. When the soldiers were given leave, they travelled from the continent to Victoria Station. As it was close to Horseferry Road, most then probably went to the Headquarters. If they needed it, they could get a bath and exchange dirty uniforms and underwear for clean garments. The latter was an obligation on them because they were inspected, and if their uniform was not deemed presentable 'or such that would reflect credit on the AIF', a soldier was issued a new uniform. They were then issued with their leave pay if this had not been done before they arrived in London, and this was especially generous. In May 1916, pay for eight days' leave was £15 for an NCO and £10 for a private. As the daily pay for a British soldier at the time was one shilling, it is easy to see why the Australians were prime targets for legal and illegal merchants, prostitutes and young women seeking a good time. The inevitable result was the greatest problem associated with leave for the AIF, its high VD rates.[2]

VD

In their stays in Egypt, both before and after the Gallipoli campaign, the Australians were struck by massive rates of VD as were the Canadians when they first arrived in Britain. The Australians at one stage in Egypt had 2,350 men in the Venereal Disease Hospital (and at least the same number being treated privately) while the Canadians in their first fourteen weeks in Britain admitted to 1,249 cases of VD. The Australian rate, if anything, increased after the bulk of the troops were transferred to France. Both formations regarded this with horror, both on moral grounds and because it wasted fighting men, since it took an average of 49 days to cure each infected

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1 Ibid; Historical Record of the AIF and War Chest Club.

2 In November 1916, Anderson noted that the men were paid a £ 1 per day of their leave to a maximum of £10 and that if they spent this early they would be given a subsistence allowance and then returned to France early — a good incentive for the men to practise some economies. Anderson to Dept of Defence, Despatch Number 53, 28 November 1916, Anderson Papers, PR 83/20, AWM.

soldier. Each force attacked the problem in different ways and differently again from the British.[1]

Anderson in typical fashion raged about the conditions in London which led to these high rates. He wrote in one of his despatches to the Department of Defence that 'the best friend to the Germans is Venereal Disease among Allied Troops and experience has shown us what a busy friend it has been'. He claimed that in Cairo the AIF had been able to ameliorate the problem by providing counter attractions and 'clean amusement' through the Anzac Hostel. This was not now as easy and he believed that 'London is the cesspit of the world in this filthy regard, and our men, quite unprepared to cope with such conditions, suffered most seriously'. The problem was caused both by prostitutes and what he called 'enthusiastic amateurs'. This latter sentiment was backed up by the representatives at the Interallied Sanitary Conferences of 1918 and 1919 in which 'practically every national representative' emphasised that the most striking feature of the VD problem was the '"amateur" prostitute'. Whoever was responsible, the estimated 200,000 infected women in London alone in 1918 caused great problems for the administration of all the armies.[2]

In Egypt, the problem developed quickly and proved a serious one for the AIF. To combat the problem, on 1 February 1915 the Australian Government enacted a regulation that 'No pay will be issued while abroad for any period of absence from duty on account of venereal disease'. These forfeitures were entered into the paybook of the soldier concerned. This was an extremely unpopular measure and 'It consequently resulted in a heavy "loss" of pay books, until the authorities adopted a mode of entry which concealed the cause of the forfeiture'. Butler notes also that this regulation discriminated against the sufferer of gonorrhoea, who spent up to six weeks in hospital, whereas the sufferer of syphilis spent only a few days. This curtailment of pay was unique to the AIF and, although the Australian government realised it caused problems, it remained in force until 1

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1 Col A. Fortescue Duguid, *History of the Canadian Forces 1914-19 General Series Volume 1* (Ottawa: J.O. Patenaude, 1938), 141; Anderson to Dept of Defence, Despatch 43, 19 October 1916, Anderson Papers, PR 83/20, AWM.

2 Ibid; A.G. Butler, *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services 1914-1918 Volume lll Problems and Services* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1943), 152; 'Venereal Disease in the UK' by E.A. Rout included as a letter in Richardson Papers WA 230/5, NZNA.

January 1918 when, as a result of the initiative of a British officer commanding a venereal hospital in France, the Australian Government changed this to a stoppage of two shillings and sixpence per day which was similar to the practice in the CEF and the British Army.[1]

Another method of attack was to transfer VD cases, first to Malta (450 cases were sent there in March 1915) and then home in disgrace to Australia, with, for example, 261 returning home on 4 May 1915. This method clearly had problems and most cases were treated in detention barracks at Abbassia in Egypt although numbers of these men could still be returned home. In the period from February 1915 to February 1916, 5,924 cases were treated here and of these 1,344 were sent home. When a further 2,000 cases were treated in March, Birdwood decided to move the training camp to Tel El Kebir where the men would have great difficulty in going absent without leave in Cairo. The result was an immediate drop in cases to 914 for the month of April.[2]

The actual methods used to attack the problem in Egypt did not impress Howse, now DMS AIF. Butler stated that 'In some directions they were wise and vigorous but organisation by units themselves and their commanders was too slight'. Some thought was given to planning a more systematic attack on the disease, but the most effective means of combating it was to move the troops further from Cairo so that they were not tempted to absent themselves from the camps to head to the brothels of the Wazza area, hence Birdwood's decision to move the training camps. This brought the epidemic under control but it flared up again when the AIF moved to Europe.[3]

In its attack on the problem in London, the AIF was fortunate to have in Anderson and Howse men whose attitudes were very similar (something Anderson acknowledged in one of his reports to Pearce). Both were very conservative in their attitudes to sex, Anderson stressing that he had 'almost prudish ideas about continence', but both disliked VD and took a pragmatic approach to the problem, and worried more about reducing it than about the moral consequences of attacking the disease. Anderson in a fairly typical fashion took upon himself the full responsibility for the

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1 Butler, *Medical History Vol .III*, pp 153-4.
2 Patsy Adam-Smith, *The Anzacs* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1981), 281.
3 *Ibid*, 155.

methods, emphasising that he had not even consulted Birdwood about them mainly, he said, because Birdwood was 'an Imperial officer bound by Imperial "shibboleths" and regulations'.[1]

The scheme which he and Howse enacted in London is laid out in Butler's third volume. It accepted that large numbers of the men would want to have intercourse when on leave, especially as many believed that abstinence was positively harmful to a man. The scheme, therefore, had four aspects: firstly, an education campaign designed to try to persuade the men to practise abstinence when on leave coupled with arranging 'wholesome' activities for the men on leave; secondly, the provision, freely and with no moral strictures, of a prophylactic kit, given despite worries that thereby there was a 'risk also of initiating a certain number into the knowledge of methods that later might be used to prevent conception'; thirdly to establish numbers of 'Blue Light' clinics in which men could have an 'abortive' treatment for possible infections as early as possible; finally, a special hospital was established for the developed cases.[2]

In bringing in their scheme Anderson and Howse were aided to some extent by military regulations in force in the AIF. It was already a crime to conceal VD (as in all sections of the BEF) and, as has been noted, the AIF did not issue pay to soldiers suffering from VD. The medical service stressed to the troops that using condoms and reporting to treatment stations early came close to eliminating the chances of catching VD (treatment within six hours guaranteed a cure for gonorrhoea within a week for 90% of cases), so all this encouraged the soldiers to report early for treatment.[3]

The AIF waged its campaign both in the depots and in London, based on Horseferry Road. Howse appointed to head the campaign, Colonel George Raffan, an expert who drew up the scheme when he was based in Egypt as an officer at the Australian VD treatment centre (Australian Dermatological Hospital or ADH). Raffan ensured that medical officers made regular checks on the men and that they closely supervised the running of the early treatment centres. He also ensured that at each command depot, there was at least one medical orderly trained to carry out

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1 Anderson to Pearce, Despatch 43, ibid; Butler, *Medical History lll*, 155.
2 Ibid, 157. Unless otherwise noted, the following information all comes from Butler, *Medical History Vol. lll*, 157-89.
3 Ibid,

the process of early treatment. Before any soldier went on leave, he had to prove that he had reported to his medical officer for instructions. When he returned from leave, he likewise had to prove that he had reported to his medical officer within twenty four hours of his return. In both depots and combat units, medical officers delivered lectures to encourage the men to avoid excessive drinking, and immorality. More practically, they also told the men of the dangers of VD and methods of combating it.[1]

When each soldier went on leave, if he wished, he carried with him a prophylactic outfit that was issued free of charge, a card telling him how to use this and advising him of the need for early treatment, and he could also purchase condoms. On leave he was advised to use the 'Blue Light Depots' which were open twenty four hours a day, one being located at Administrative Headquarters in London. An idea of the scope of these measures is shown by a report from Raffan in which he noted that during the nineteen months ending December 1918,

> 235,277 soldiers went on leave from the AIF Depots.
> 171,277 cards of instructions were accepted.
> 142,609 prophylactic outfits were accepted.
> 168,563 men attended for prophylactic treatment.
> 12,128 attended for abortive treatment.[2]

The Australian Dermatological Hospital was established in 1915 with 100 beds, but it soon grew in size. By July 1917 it had been raised in status to a General Hospital with 1,040 beds to cater for the 1200 patients then under treatment (Butler does not explain the discrepancy).[3]

In Egypt in the Venereal Hospital at Mena, patients were treated by the Army as criminals by being placed in a hospital surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by armed sentries. In Britain, these methods were changed so that the men were treated as in a 'normal hospital', with consequent great improvements in morale and a lessening of the temptation for the soldiers to conceal their disease.[4]

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.

In Paris, the men were able to visit Blue Light Depots run by both the AIF and the CEF and later in the war they were helped by the actions of Ettie Rout, a New Zealand woman who had volunteered to help run canteens in Egypt but soon began to help attack the VD problem. She advocated education and prophylactic methods and recommended 'clean' brothels to the troops, and railed against those who wanted to keep the men in ignorance of preventative methods. She thought that they 'hold that the true remedy for Disease and Immorality is to Abolish Calomel Ointment, and this would bring the diggers to their knees with a Bible in one hand and a Child — probably Syphilitic — in the other'. She argued for the effectiveness of disinfectants by pointing out that in August/September 1917 over 5000 troops came on leave to Paris and over 1,000 became infected with VD, whereas from November 1917 to March 1918 over 30,000 men visited Paris and only 3% were infected with VD. The difference was that, in the latter period, disinfectants were available.

The Australian methods contrast slightly with those of the other national forces in the BEF. Neither the British nor the Canadians stopped the pay of soldiers being treated for VD, although both reduced their pay (by 15 cents per day by the Canadians in 1915). The Canadians had a huge problem on Salisbury Plain in the winter of 1914-15 with a rate of up to 222 cases per 1,000. This was eventually reduced to a figure of about 83 per 1,000 (the Australian average through the war was 84.79 per 1,000). The chief means of attack were an education program and early treatment centres, although they did not officially condone the issue of condoms. The members of the various dominion forces were free to utilise the treatment centres established by any of the AIF, CEF and NZEF and in fact in March 1918, in an attempt to attack the problem in provincial centres, the DMS of the AIF and the CEF met and agreed to establish combined centres in various cities. Australia would run one in each of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Nottingham, Canada in Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham and New Zealand in Bristol, Aberdeen and Brighton.[1]

Increasingly, the dominions complained that the greatest cause of complaint was the large numbers of full and part-time prostitutes who abounded in London and around the army bases. From early in his stay in

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[1] Ibid; Report from the Minster of Militia and Defence, 18 September 1915, RG 24, 1502, file HQ 683-1-30-2, NAC; Memorandum on Meeting Re VD 27 February 1918, MG 27 11 D9, vol 184, file H66, NAC; RG 9 III A1, vol 89, file 10-12-3, NAC.

London, Anderson was vitriolic in his attacks on the vice in London and, similarly, Carson complained about the matter in 1915. Increasingly the dominions demanded help in the form of punishments for the women responsible for passing VD on to troops. They gained limited success, but this question was outside the ambit of the administration of the forces and the discussions were held on a governmental level, including the Imperial War Conference in April 1917. By February 1918, the dominions had persuaded the British to add a new regulation to DORA (40D), which made it a summary offence 'to solicit, invite or perform sexual intercourse with any member of His Majesty's Armed forces.' The wording seems to have been chosen deliberately to enable women other than prostitutes to be charged, since these accounted for a large proportion of those who passed on the disease (according to one survey, about 35% of cases). The amendment had little real impact on the problem and was repealed soon after the war, and so gave no protection to troops during the demobilisation process. At all times, VD remained a serious problem and one which caused the various administrative services significant concerns.[1]

1918 Leave

We have seen that the Australians, complaints to the contrary, received more leave than their British comrades. Despite this, they did have genuine grounds for complaint because while the British soldier was able to visit his family, no Australian was able to get home leave. This became a grievance in the AIF and Hughes seized upon it as a chance to gain political advantage.

In May 1917, the Australian government was preparing to go to the polls amidst falling enlistments for the AIF. As part of its campaign to maintain the force, on 29 May Pearce appealed for 5000 men to come forward to take the place of a similar number of men from the original contingent who would take home leave. Hughes repeated this appeal in June, and the idea of home leave for the 'original Anzacs' struck a popular chord in soldiers and civilians alike, even if it did not induce men to volunteer to take their place. Instead, Hughes proposed to the British government on 13 September 1917 that such leave be given in any case.

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[1] Suzanne Buckley, 'The Failure to Resolve the Problem of Venereal Disease Among the Troops on Britain During World War I', *War and Society: A Yearbook of Military History Volume* 2 (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 65-85; RG 9 III, B1, Vol 863, NAC.

Even before this, his idea had clearly gained wide publicity because the Canadians heard a rumour (which was later denied by Australia House) that on 17 July, the Australians had published a list of five thousand men who would be given home leave. The Australian High commissioner was able to reassure the Canadians that Australia had not taken any action to get this leave at the time of the correspondence.[1]

The suggestion nonetheless touched a chord in Borden, and on 4 August 1917 he queried the possibility of Canadians getting home leave in the coming winter. He was dissuaded by Perley, who pointed out the problems of shipping (clearly echoing British objections) and the great problems this would cause in a time of reduced manpower. Later, Currie informed Borden that he strongly favoured the idea of men from Canada's first contingent getting home leave in the winter of 1917, but Perley informed him that the British were not in favour because of transport difficulties and (probably more importantly) because of the problems that this would raise among other troops.[2]

As Borden was set straight on this issue, the Australians were being told a similar story. Pearce wrote to Birdwood asking about leave for the 1914 men (as they were referred to), but Birdwood decried the idea. He argued that shortages of transport made the idea impractical, and that it could even lead to the breaking up of an existing division. He proposed instead that he begin sending 1914 men home in any vacancies that might appear in the transports, although he conceded that this would be a long and slow process. His major suggestion was that the men instead be given a medal for taking part in the Gallipoli campaign, a suggestion that gained some support from the Foreign Office as a concession that might be needed to avert trouble in the AIF.[3]

Despite Birdwood's lack of sympathy with the idea (which would have deprived him of a sizeable number of his senior NCOs and junior

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1 Ernest Scott, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume XI* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1936), 409; Canadian High Commissioner's Office to Australia House, and reply 31 August and 4 September 1917; Borden Papers, C 4321, file MG 26, Hi(a), vol 83, NAC.

2 Perley to Borden, 5 November 1917, Sims to Turner, 21 September 1917, Perley to Borden 5 November 1917, Borden Papers reel C4321, file MG 26, Hi(a), vol 83, NAC.

3 Birdwood to Pearce, 9 September and 14 September 1917, Birdwood Papers, DRL3376, items 26 (a) and 30; AWM; Walter Long Letter, 3 October 1917, Co 616/70, PRO.

officers) the Australian Government continued to pursue it with the British Government. The Imperial government was aghast because they saw it leading to similar requests from other dominions and from British soldiers serving in distant theatres as the Middle East. Pleading military necessity and transport difficulties, the British rejected the idea. This was reported in a press release from the Department of Defence, issued in November after the defeat of the second conscription plebiscite, which also stressed the danger from submarines (although this does not appear to have been mentioned by the British). The release indicated that about half of the men concerned would be officers or NCOs, and urged others to increase the rate of recruitment to lighten the load of those at the front. By October 1917, the Australian government had come around to agree that it would be too difficult to give the 1914 men leave, and it agreed to its deferral but it did urge the idea of a Gallipoli medal.[1]

By early 1918, Birdwood had come up with a partial solution to the desire among the troops for home leave, and he was by then sending about fifty 1914 men home on each returning ship. He claimed that this was without the knowledge of the Home Office, which would 'howl' if it knew what he was doing. He justified their being given passage on the ships by employing them on submarine guard duty. He then requested that they be given two months leave in Australia before being returned to France. He was most anxious that this should not be publicised in Australia, presumably because of the reaction from those related to the men who were not given the leave.[2]

By July 1918 Birdwood had managed to get 300 men home to Australia by this means, but by now Hughes was in Europe and the personal appeals from the troops caused him to fight more actively for home leave. By August Hughes was campaigning strongly for the 1914 men to be given home leave and the remainder of the force to be given a long rest from combat (partly because he was worried that if they were not given a rest, the AIF would be so reduced in size that he would have no influence on the peace conference that he knew would be held in the next year or two).[3]

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1 British Foreign Office to Department of Defence, 4 October 1917, CP 78/23, file 1917/89/2990, AA; Press statement, 9 November 1917, A2, item 1918/24, AA; Governor General to Secretary of State for Colonies, 16 October 1917, CO 616/70, PRO.

2 Birdwood to Pearce, 1 February 1918, Bean Papers 3 DRL 606, item 237, AWM.

3 Birdwood to Pearce, 8 July 1918, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376. item 26 (a), Hughes to Sir Henry Wilson, 23 August, and 3 September 1918, Sir Henry Wilson papers, IWM; C.E.W.

Hughes was soon successful in his campaign of 'persistent attacks on authorities'. He was able to convince the British that they should agree to the Australian 1914 men being given leave, something he kept a secret from Monash and Haig in case they opposed it. It came as a surprise to Monash when the first of the 1914 men were sent a telegram on 12 September telling them to entrain on 15 September 1918. The men concerned were also surprised, and had only a few hours notice such that many had no time to collect all their belongings and many left souvenirs and other items behind. The leave involved about 7,700 men who had left Australia in 1914, with about half being NCOs and officers, and they left on an order of priority drawn up by the administration of the AIF. First preference was given to married men serving in France ranging through to single men serving in Britain. If the men had wives in Britain, New Zealand, Canada or the USA, they could spend their leave in those countries. For those going to the latter countries, the Australian government paid the cost of their transport so long as this was not more expensive than the cost of returning them to Australia. In every case, the men were given seventy five days' leave. In the end, of course, the length of the leave was academic because the war ended before most of the men could be returned. When they left, most of the AIF saw that there was little likelihood of their returning, and Monash mentions that the men were farewelled on this basis by the AIF.[1]

This chapter has dealt with areas in which the administration of the AIF dealt with more personal matters affecting the men of the force. It has not covered much of what was needed by the soldiers for their daily life and comforts. Matters of supply and ordnance, discipline and medical treatment will be dealt with in following chapters. Other matters of constant, and greater concern such as the need for baths and personal hygiene, the provision of canteens, and the storage of kit when the soldiers were in the line, were important to the men but of only marginal interest to this thesis and so have not been treated. What we have seen, however, is that in such

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Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume VI* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1942), 877-8.

1 Hughes to Watt, 17 September 1918, CP 360/8/1, item 1, AA; Diary entry 17 September 1918, Bean Diaries, 3 DRL 606, item 115, AWM; Birdwood to Munro Ferguson, 17 September 1918, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 34, AWM; Birdwood to Pearce, 18 September, 1918, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL, 3376, item 26(a), AWM; Birdwood to Pearce, 18 September 1918, Pearce Papers, A4719, AA Report Number 75, 12 October 1918, Richardson Papers, WA 231/11, NANZ.

matters the AIF kept a constant watch on the welfare of the troops and fought to uphold their interests. It also fought, with increasing intensity, to ensure that Australians were given every chance to gain the training and subsequent promotions which would ensure that capable Australians were recognised fully. At many stages the British resisted these changes, but where the AIF and the CEF were concerned the 'mother country' finally acknowledged the right of the dominion to have a greater control over its own affairs.

Chapter 8

Supply in the Field and the Administration of a Battle

If any of the aspects of the First World War can be viewed as virtually an unqualified success for the British Armies in France, it must be their general administration. The feeding of armies of millions of men and their maintenance and supply with previously unimagined amounts of material was a massive undertaking, and one whose success should have been a source of pride for the administrative officers. An obvious measure of this success was the preparation for a battle and the maintenance of the fighting services during that battle. The manner in which the administrative side of the BEF conducted its functions was superb. The great tragedies of the war stem from the fact that, until 1918, the tactics, fighting techniques and military equipment could not match this administrative effort.

During the Gallipoli campaign the administrative arrangements suffered because of a shortage of trained staff and a shortage of material, each of which compounded the difficulties of maintaining small bridgeheads in hostile territory. Over the course of the campaign, the methods evolved were reasonably successful in maintaining supplies, albeit that the final decision to evacuate was strongly influenced by the probability that the Allied armies on the Peninsula would face insurmountable problems of supply during the winter months.

Getting supplies to the men at Gallipoli was both simple and difficult. It was simple because the bridgehead was small, and after the heavy fighting in August died down and the trenches were manned less heavily, there was no real shortage of men to carry the supplies to the front-line troops. On the other hand, it was difficult because War Office had to send supplies out from Britain to a distant theatre. These then had to be landed on a beach-head that was under full observation and underwent constant, though spasmodic, shelling by the enemy. All of this was complicated by the need to import a supply of water and the threat of submarine activity. The idea that supply was both difficult and simple is illustrated by one writer on the campaign who noted that '"supply" presented few complications on the spot and "transport" none. There was only the question of moving an insignificant distance forward what had been landed on the beaches. This involved hard and unpleasant work but it did not call for any particular

subtleties to perform it.' This does not deny, however, that the work of the RASC was vital, dangerous and arduous.[1]

The British had anticipated problems with maintaining logistic support to the Dardanelles but had counted on being able to use the large harbour of Mudros on the island of Lemnos as a major base until the campaign had been won. When the campaign developed from a show of force to get the navy through to Constantinople into a major landing, Hamilton decided that Lemnos was unsuitable as the main base because it was largely waterless. He therefore accepted Sir John Maxwell's suggestion that the MEF should use Alexandria for this purpose instead.

Once the campaign had begun, most supplies were sent out from England with only uniforms and some equipment coming directly from Australia. These were unloaded in Egypt and then transhipped to the Peninsula. This took about three weeks from the time of leaving Britain. In the early days of the campaign, the freighters carrying the goods from Alexandria would anchor close to the shoreline of the beach-heads and at night transfer the goods to lighters and small boats which would then take them to shore, where fatigue parties would stack them in dumps on the beach. This changed when a German U-Boat sank two British battleships off the beaches, the *Triumph* on 25 May and the *Majestic* two days later. Immediately all ships fled from the beaches and headed for Mudros where they could get some protection from netting. Now the island of Imbros, located between the Peninsula and Mudros, became an intermediate base for the landings despite its poor handling facilities. Hamilton's staff eventually arranged to have three 12,000 ton vessels moored at Imbros as floating ordnance depots — one each for ordnance stores and ammunition and one as a supply depot. From these vessels, prisoners of war transhipped the goods on to small vessels (which were in very short supply) to be taken to the beaches.[2]

This shortage of small craft caused some problems for Brigadier-General A. J. de Lotbiniere, the Chief Engineer of Birdwood's corps, and

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1 Major John Gillam, *Gallipoli Diary* (Stevenage: The Strong Oak Press Ltd, 1989), foreward.

2 Lieut-General Sir George MacMunn, 'The Lines of Communication in the Dardanelles', *The Army Quarterly* XX, No1 (April 1930), 53; Colonel R.H. Beadon, *The Royal Army Service Corps: A History of Transport and Supply in the British Army* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931), 166-7.

especially for engineering stores. In July he persuaded the authorities to allow the transports to revert to unloading directly on to the beaches during the night. This did not last, and in a short time the submarine threat forced the authorities to forbid this activity, even at night.[1]

No matter how supplies were taken to the beach, the AIF had great difficulty landing them until its engineers built a reasonably secure landing stage, designated Watson's Pier. This was soon followed by another, but neither was totally satisfactory since they were unusable in a westerly or south-westerly wind. Despite this they were still vital for the landing of supplies and the destruction of Watson's Pier in a severe storm in November was one of the factors which persuaded the High Command to evacuate the Peninsula. It saw that such storms, which could become common in winter, would lead to the destruction of the force if supplies of food, water and ammunition could not be maintained.[2]

As noted, fatigue parties unloaded the goods and stacked them in dumps on the beaches. The British in France had quickly devised the dump system in 1914 and found it so useful that they naturally used it at Anzac. Goods were simply dumped at a convenient place behind the lines, perhaps fenced (certainly not at Anzac because fencing material was not available), and guarded. They were under the control of the RASC who ensured that men who wanted food, clothing or ammunition simply had to indent for them and take them away.

In this campaign, the first of the dumps was established on Anzac Cove beach itself. This dump soon became overcrowded and confused so a second dump was established on the beach further to the south. With space so limited at Anzac, the beach in between these was soon used as a depot for engineering stores such as timber, barbed wire, pickets, tools, etc, but this had the effect of simply adding to the confusion. Because the dumps were so close to the front, the Turks were always able to shell them, and Bean believed that if the Turks had had enough shells they could have defeated

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1 Brig-General de Lotbiniere to Major General G.K. Scott Moncrieff, Director of Fortifications and Works at the War Office, 24 July and 29 September 1915, WO 161/32, PRO.

2 C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume II* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1924), 351.

the Allies much sooner by shelling the beach heavily and making these dumps untenable.[1]

For the landing itself, each man was issued 200 rounds of ammunition and three days' supply of food. Because it feared problems with transport, the ordnance service later landed an additional 300 rounds of ammunition and seven days' supply of food for each man which it stored in the dumps. When submarines began to operate this was not considered a large enough reserve and it was quickly increased to ten days' supply of food and then, on 17 July, to 23 days' rations and two days' fuel.[2]

To help get the goods to the front, the RASC landed 450 mules to carry packs or pull small transport carts, but most of the carrying had to be done by fatigue parties (often made up of men on minor charges) sent to the beaches from the front-line units. In the first few days' confused fighting, these parties, or even individual men, could collect ammunition on a simple verbal request. After this a more orderly system was introduced in which goods were only supplied on production of an indent from the unit's senior officer. As noted elsewhere, the initial unrestricted and unrecorded issues did cause some problems subsequently with calculating capitation charges.[3]

The same system was also used to issue food. The daily ration on the Peninsula was adequate, but not as good as the troops would be issued in France. In May the ration was:

Preserved Meat	12 oz	Tea	.725 oz
Bread	1.25 lb	Jam	4 oz
Biscuit	1.25 lb	Sugar	3 oz
Bacon	4 oz	Salt	.5 oz
Cheese	3 oz	Mustard	.02 oz
Onions	8 oz	Pepper	c .025 oz
OR Potatoes	8 oz		
and onions	4 oz		

1 C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume I* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1921), 546; Bean, *Official History Vol.II* , 356.
2 Beadon, *R.A.S.C.*, 159.
3 Beadon, *R.A.S.C*, 159, 165-6; Bean, *Official History Vol. I* , 359-61.

As well, men were occasionally issued a daily rum ration, were given 2 ounces of tobacco a day and would be issued lime juice if fresh vegetables were not available. This ration was taken up to the men in the front line where they cooked it individually or in groups using primitive stoves that they had devised for themselves. Officially, the rations were supplemented with bread baked daily by an Australian field bakery based on Imbros, but many soldiers have subsequently complained that bread was rarely seen by the Australians. Fresh meat was available occasionally in the early stages of the campaign, but later it was rarely supplied because the early attempts showed that it became fly-blown too easily and quickly.

The men's greatest complaint about the food was the monotony of the diet and that they had no chance to buy anything extra to vary it because there were no canteens at Anzac. In France, the army had established canteens which sold extras such as tinned fruit, coffee, and pickles but, probably because of the demands on transport, and despite requests from Birdwood, only one canteen ship was sent from England and this was sold out immediately. The only other chance the troops had to vary their diet was by occasionally being able to buy extras such as eggs, milk and chocolate cake from enterprising sailors on the beach.[1]

The lack of canteens was only an inconvenience. The greatest problem of supply during the campaign was getting enough water and this was not made any easier because it had been anticipated. Birdwood knew that there was little water on the Peninsula and had planned before the landing to construct tube wells and had pin-pointed places where water might be found. He had also obtained a large number of kerosene tins to carry water and about 400 donkeys to carry these up the hills. Soon after the landing, he had wells sunk in Shrapnel Gully that yielded 20,000 gallons of water daily in the early months of the campaign. However, when the weather got drier, the wells only yielded 12,000 to 14,000 gallons per day. This supply was inadequate and had to be supplemented by supplies brought from Egypt. These were stored in a large new oil tanker at Mudros

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1 Bean, *Official History Vol.II* , 363-4 ; Alan Moorhead, *Gallipoli* (Sydney, Macmillan, 1989), 163; John Robertson, *Anzac and Empire: The Tragedy & Glory of Gallipoli* (Melbourne: Hamlyn, 1990), 147; Caroline Laurence and Joanne Tiddy, *From Bully Beef to Icecream: The Diet of the Australian Armed Forces in World War I and World War II.* (c1989), 12; Michael B. Tyquin, *Gallipoli: The Medical War. The Australian Army Medical Services in the Dardanelles Campaign of 1915* (Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1993), 128-32.

and sent in water lighters to the beaches. Here it was pumped into storage tanks such as the one built later in the campaign which held 75,000 gallons, or enough for the Anzac front for at least 48 hours. Birdwood wanted this in case bad weather prevented lighters from discharging water. Early in the campaign, there was no control over men taking this water but, from July, because some units were taking more than they were entitled to, men had to present proper requisition orders to draw water. This change enabled the AIF to manage the last of its great supply problems of the campaign. After the move to France, the question of supply would become much easier.[1]

In France, the AIF assimilated itself into the established administrative processes of the BEF. When the first Australian divisions arrived in France, the British issued steel helmets and rifles to those reinforcements who had brought none with them and all units were issued weapons that had been unavailable on the Peninsula such as Mills Bombs, Lewis guns and trench mortars. They then transported the troops to training areas where they spent some time before they entered the front line. Here they were also introduced to the quite efficient arrangements that the BEF had developed to keep the men fed and supplied with all their requirements, including the large amounts of ammunition that modern warfare demanded. For the greater part of the war, these arrangements were those of siege warfare, with large scale attacks taking only few days in the average soldier's service (for instance, the Australian 1st Battalion took part in only eleven major attacks in its 30 months' service on the Western Front, each lasting on average only one or two days). Because of this, we shall look firstly at the daily routine of administration of siege troops before looking at the arrangements made to launch a successful attack. In this section, our discussion will be modelled to an extent on the Battle of Messines (7 June 1917).[2]

Very quickly in 1914, the British learned that modern war would place much greater demands on the supply services than they had ever envisaged. Not only were armies larger than ever before, but they used up ammunition and equipment at vastly increased rates and the variety of material they needed also greatly increased. To give an example of these

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1 Bean, *Official History Vol. I* , 573; Bean, *Official History Vol. II* , 361-2; Brig-General de Lotbiniere to Major General G.K. Scott Moncrieff, 24 July and 29 August 1915, WO 161/32, PRO; Sir George MacMunn, 'The Lines of Communication', 61.

2 War Diary 1 Battalion, AWM 4, item 23/181-35, AWM.

changes, the *Grand Armée* of Napoleon numbered 130,000 men at the Battle of Borodino. In that battle, it used up an estimated 375 tons of ammunition and 600 tons of food. Compared with this, the BEF *each day* between 9 August 1914 and 20 March 1920, sent to France an average of approximately 16,386 tons of supplies of all kinds including ammunition, coal, POL (petrol, oil and lubricants), ordnance and engineering stores and animal feed. As another example, in the four to five months of the Franco-Prussian war, the average soldier fired no more than 56 rounds *in total*; whereas, in the First World War, Britain sent an average of 5.5 million rounds of ammunition *per day* to France and in the last 22 days of the war the BEF used a daily average of 4,768 tons of ammunition, including 167,800 artillery and mortar rounds. Clearly to meet such a mind-numbing demand, the British developed an efficient system of administration.[1]

GHQ in France would order food, ammunition and materials on the basis of usage revealed by returns sent in from the various corps headquarters. The War Office then ordered material to be sent to one of eight Base Supply Depots in France. The two at Boulogne and Calais/Vendroux fed the northern three armies of the BEF while the three at Le Havre, Rouen and Dieppe fed the southern two armies. Besides these major bases, there were Base Depots at Marseilles, St Valéry-sur-Somme (on the mouth of the Somme) and Cherbourg.[2]

A Base Depot was simply a storage area that contained the wide variety of goods required by a modern army. These ranged from axes to stoves, horse shoes to howitzers and 'everything from a nail to a 14 inch gun'. In the Base Depots, the goods would be stored in large hangars such as one in Le Havre that was half a mile long by 600 feet wide and contained 80,000 tons of goods. In these hangars, similar goods were stored together. A separate section under an officer managed each class of good so that on receipt of an indent the material could be sent out at virtually a minute's notice. These sub-groups turned goods over quickly by loading them into complete trains of the one product (eg meat, flour, etc) and then sent them

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1 War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War 1914-1920* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1922), 480-5; Martin Van Creveld, 'Supplying an Army: An Historical View', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies* , vol 123, June 1978, 59-60; Cyril Falls (ed), *Great Military Battles* (London: Spring Books, 1964), 128; Anon, 'The Administrative Services of the BEF During the Great War', *The Army Quarterly*, Vol III, number 2, January 1923, 309.

2 Beadon, *R.A. S. C.*, 94-5.

on by rail to the Advanced Supply Depot. Because new vessels entered the port every day it was essential that this quick turnover be maintained.[1]

In 1916, because the BEF faced an increased demand for engineering stores, it established two Base Depots for these goods alone. One, about seven kilometres from Calais at Les Attaques on the northern line, had both rail and canal access and eventually grew to cover 65 acres. The other, at Abancourt on the southern line, had only rail access but its importance is shown by its size as it had grown to cover 163 acres in May 1918. Again, goods indented from these stores would be sent by rail to the Advanced Supply Depots.[2]

Because the enormous amount of rail traffic that all this engendered placed great pressure on the French rail network, rolling stock and manpower, the British took over the running of 'their' lines in 1916 and appointed a Director General of Transport who supervised the running of all transport systems including overseas shipping, railways, canal traffic and roads. To do this, they now supplied virtually all the men needed to run, repair, and maintain the road rail system, and sent over rail rolling stock. This was no small task, by 31 December 1918 they had shipped over 52,597 railway trucks and 1,205 locomotives to France, and in 1917 alone, the BEF made 1,215 miles of new roads and used 2,340 tons of road metal in the task.[3]

Food and ammunition were handled by separate systems. Because of the difficulties France had in feeding itself, the British bought virtually no food from the French except for that which was supplied to the troops directly in estaminets behind the lines. Thus the BEF imported virtually all of its food, including some from Britain but the bulk from the Empire and the Americas. At first, most of these supplies were first sent to Britain, but later to cut down handling costs practically all were sent directly to France and then to Advanced Supply Depots.

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1 Ibid, 99; 'The Allied Armies Under Marshal Foch in the Franco-Belgian Theatre of Operations. Report of the Military Board of Allied Supply. Vol 2', Washington, 1925, 249.
2 Ibid, 350-1.
3 War Office, *Statistics*, 518; Beadon, *R.A. S. C.*, 96-7; 'Report Military Board of Supply', 502.

There were three Advanced Supply Depots, one each at Abbeville/Mautort, Abancourt and Outreau. Here the officer in charge received a daily record of the holdings of the Base Depot and what the various trains contained so that when a train arrived he quickly had it unloaded and then packed into divisional trains that he sent on to the Regulating Station. This process was devised to be as efficient as possible, since each day Abancourt alone sent out an average of twenty-one trains containing the rations for 84,000 men. To manage this enormous task, by the middle years of the war the army was making good use of the volunteers of the Kitchener Armies and had posted ex-civilian businessmen to manage all of these bases, presumably because they were more efficient at their tasks than regular soldiers.[1]

At the Advanced Supply Depot, the groceries sent from the Base Depots were broken down into 'section pack trains' and sent to the railheads. Each division had four sections (one for headquarters and the artillery, and one for each brigade) and at the railhead the quartermaster of each of these sections supervised as 'his' train was unloaded onto the motor transport of the Divisional Supply Column and taken to the section dump (also called a 'filling point'). Until 1917, this was done by motor transport using 3-ton lorries (of which the Australian 2nd Division, for example, had 43 in January 1918). After this, the railheads were located so far forward that divisions could save motor transport by picking up the rations with the animal transport that, if the 2nd Division is typical, consisted of 65 General Service wagons and 4 limbered wagons.[2]

At these refilling points, which were managed by nine men an NCO and an officer, goods were stacked along a road, so that a stack each of hay, oats and bran, meats, groceries, bread and sundries was separated from each other by about ten yards. Sometimes they covered the stacks with tarpaulins, but often not. When the Divisional Ammunition Column (DAC) arrived, it loaded up with a minimum of confusion as each wagon took on a load from only one of these stacks.[3]

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1 Beadon, *R.A. S. C.* 99; The Directorate of Supplies, WO 158/2, PRO.

2 'Report Military Board of Supply', 309-10; 'Supply of Ammunition, Rations and R.E. Stores', 2 January 1918, Private papers of J.M. Durrant, PR 88/009, AWM.

3 'Orders Relating to the Procedure to be Adopted in the Demand and Supply of Rations', AWM 27, item 392 (7), AWM.

From refilling point the supplies were taken to battalion stores. Here rations were loaded into sandbags, one for each section, by the various company quartermaster sergeants. They were then sent by light railway or pack animals and taken to the trench dumps. Here fatigue parties picked them up and took them up the communication trenches to the troops in the front line.[1]

Very quickly a standardised divisional pack was developed and this was loaded and sent out daily. A pack in 1916 included, amongst others, the following items:

Daily

15,000 rations of bread;
3,375 lbs of biscuits;
5,000 lbs of jam;
3,750 lbs of cheese;
550 lbs of salt;
77,000 lbs of oats (for the horses);
1 bale of latrine paper;
40 gallons of paraffin;
600 gallons of petrol; in two gallon re-useable cans or four gallon cans;
15,000 rations of fresh meat;
4,000 rations of preserved meat;
5,000 lbs of bacon;
4,070 lbs of sugar;
840 lbs of tea;
2,240 lbs of bran (for the horses);
12,500 lbs of charcoal;
15,000 lbs of coke;
800 lbs of chloride of lime (a water purifier).

This standard pack was varied according to the day of the week.
On Mondays and Thursdays, M & V (tinned meat and vegetables, usually called 'Maconachie' after one of the main manufacturers) was issued instead of preserved meat.

Preserved fruit was issued on Wednesdays instead of jam.
Coke and charcoal were only issued to divisions in the line.
In addition, there were less frequent deliveries.

Twice a week

2,500 lbs of butter;
80 lbs of mustard;
140 gross of matches;
5 gallons of cycle oil.

Weekly

1,250 lbs of tobacco;
1 sack of flour;
1,250 lbs of cigarettes;
1,000 flypapers.

In addition, 62 gallons of lime juice were issued three times a week.[2]

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.

The actual rations that were issued at various times in France are shown in the following table. It will be noted that these are slightly higher than the rations issued at Gallipoli (a sign of supply problems in that campaign) and that the men were paid a daily allowance with which they could supplement these rations. In practice, this money was often given to the unit cooks who would purchase extras at canteens near the lines.

Scale of Rations Issuable to the Fighting Troops in France

Daily Scale unless otherwise stated

ARTICLE	From 4 April 1916	From 20 Jan. 1917	From 1 July 1917	From 26 Jan. 1918
Meat (fresh or frozen) OR	1.25 lb	1 lb	1 lb	1 lb
Meat (preserved)	1 lb	.75 lb	9 oz	9 oz
Bread OR	1.25 lb	1 lb	1 lb	1 lb
Biscuit	.75 lb	.75 lb	10 oz	10 oz
Bacon	4 oz	4 oz	4 oz	4 oz
Cheese	3 oz	2 oz	2 oz	2 oz
Fresh Vegetables OR	8 oz	8 oz	8 oz	8 oz
Dried Vegetables	2 oz	2 oz	2 oz	2 oz
Tea	. 725 oz	. 725 oz	. 725 oz	. 5 oz
Jam	3 oz	3 oz	3 oz	3 oz
Butter	issued as an extra	issued as an extra	2 oz	2 oz
Sugar	3 oz	3 oz	3 oz	3 oz
Oatmeal (3 times weekly)	issued as an extra	issued as an extra	2 oz	2 oz
Rice	issued as an extra	issued as an extra	1 oz	1 oz
Salt	.5 oz	.5 oz	.25 oz	.25 oz
Mustard	.02 oz	.02 oz	.01 oz	.01 oz
Pepper	c .025 oz	c .025 oz	.01 oz	.01 oz
Milk (condensed)	1 tin for 16 men	1 tin for 12 men	1 oz	1 oz
Pickles (three times weekly)	1 oz	1 oz	1 oz	1 oz

Source: *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire*[1]

[1] War Office, *Statistics*, 584.

We should note that the bread was supplied by bakeries at the base depots at Boulogne, Le Havre, Rouen, Dieppe, Calais, Marseilles and Etaples. Because these bakeries were so far from the front, Ellis is probably correct when he states that there was little chance of the bread being anything but quite stale by the time it reached the front line. We should also note that these rations were for men serving in the front line. Men working on the lines of communication had slightly reduced rations.[1]

To help cook this food, for warmth and washing, fuel was issued on a scale of 4 lbs per man daily as follows:

(a) for men not in the trenches 2.5 lbs wood and 1.5 lbs of coal

(b) for men in the trenches 2 lbs of coke and 1.5 lb of charcoal

The difference here being forced by the need to reduce the smoke coming from the trenches.[2]

Ammunition was stored separately from the other supplies in depots that were located close to ports and had good railway facilities. In 1916, the BEF began to take ammunition across the Channel in shallow draft barges which could, if necessary, enter the French canal system. Cross-channel barge traffic (mostly ammunition) grew enormously from taking to the depots 1,904, tons per week in January 1917 to 24,977 tons per week in August 1918. At the depot, ammunition would usually be transferred from these barges and small (about 500 tons) ships into the ordinary canal barges or trains to be transferred to depots closer to the front. There were five depots on the northern line and four on the southern line. These were large, with an average capacity from 35,000 to about 68,000 tons. From these dumps ammunition was transferred by rail to one of 120 ammunition railheads from which it could be sent out to the units. The number of trains involved in this was large, for instance, in June 1918 the five Australian Divisions were using eight full sized train loads of ammunition daily.[3]

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1 The Directorate of Supplies, 6, WO 158/2, PRO; John Ellis, *Eye Deep in Hell: Life in the Trenches 1914-1918* (London: Fontana, 1977), 129.

2 'Notes for Senior Supply Officers 2nd Army, 1915', AWM 25, item 829/18, AWM; C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume III* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1929), 127;

3 Memorandum, 12 May 1916, Lloyd George Papers, D17/6/39, House of Lords' Record Office; 'Report Military Board of Supply', 258-60, 497; Sir John Monash to his family, 13 June 1918, Monash Papers, 1884, NLA.

In November 1916 the use of railway locomotives increased when a number of advanced ammunition railheads were opened to enable ammunition to be transferred from broad gauge to narrow gauge railways, thus saving on motor transport. These railheads eventually developed in size to a carrying capacity of several thousand tons and could issue as much as 2,000 tons of ammunition in a day. They were in the forward areas to permit a more rapid replenishment of units. The depots were located on a broad gauge railway that was paralleled by a road and a narrow gauge railway, so that goods could be transferred directly to lorries or narrow gauge trucks, but were not on existing communications networks. The main function of these depots was to maintain a store of ammunition close to the front in case of a major communications breakdown. In fact, no such breakdown ever occurred. Even when the major base depot at Anduicq was destroyed by bombing, on 21 July 1917, and the northern line of supply put out of action, the southern line was able to supply both sections of the front until the northern line was repaired.[1]

Artillery ammunition was transported to the front by a system similar to that for rations. Lorries took it from the railhead to the Divisional Ammunition Column and from there horse transport, using 41 GS wagons, 15 limbered wagons and 48 ammunition wagons per division, took it to refilling points where (unlike other material) it was stored in roofed sheds to keep it dry. From the refilling point it was taken to the guns by the battery limbers and stacked next to each gun. At each point along the way of this transport system, ammunition was stockpiled so that in an emergency there were always supplies ready to be rushed to the front.[2]

A variety of transport was used to get the ammunition to this forward point, but in the very intense artillery duels during the Third Battle of Ypres it was found that the light railways were too easily marked down and cut by shelling so motor transport had to be used to carry artillery ammunition during the latter stages of the battle. Later, however, these light railways again proved their worth because during the '100 Days' they were much quicker to construct than roads and both the Germans and the

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1 Report Military Board of Supply, 261-2; Extracts from War Diary, QMG BEF, 22 July 1916, AWM 26, box 40, item 40, AWM.

2 Report Military Board of Supply, 261-2.

Allies found them much more efficient than roads in bringing supplies across land broken up by heavy artillery barrages.[1]

Thus far, we have looked at the mechanisms which brought the supplies and ammunition to the rear of the front line. We must now examine the very detailed administrative arrangements by which the men in the trenches survived and carried out their tasks in the normal course of events.

Men moved into the line at night, usually after a march of from one to several days from their rest/training area. Normally, two battalions of a brigade would go into the line, another would remain in the reserve line and the fourth would be in the support line. These would alternate in the period the brigade was in the line. At the entrance to the duckboard tracks that led to the communication trench for those moving into the line (these trenches normally operated on a one-way system), the men would drop the bulk of their gear in a brigade dump that was located behind the lines and guarded until they returned to collect it. They would then collect iron rations and their first two days' rations. At another dump they collected small arms, and at another, fused hand-grenades. Generally the men tried to carry into the line enough water to last for their tour of duty, and this they would get by loading petrol tins from a water cart that had been filled at the nearest safe watering point. Finally, they would then find a fourth dump at the entrance to the communication trench and here they would indent for and collect trench stores.[2]

Trench stores were those items needed in the trenches but not elsewhere, which were not issued to a unit but to the trench system itself. They included such things as solidified alcohol (used to fight trench foot and for fuel for cooking), flares, periscopes and telescopic sights for snipers. Most important of the trench stores were the gum boots that were essential to help the men fight trench foot. These boots were divided into four groups; one for each of the battalions in the line, one for the battalion in support and one for the drying room. As a battalion moved out from

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1 'Supply, PR 88/009, AWM; AWM, 25, item 315/4, AWM; Unknown 'The Administrative Services of the B.E.F. During the Great War', *The Army Quarterly*, January 1923, vol III, no 2, 306; James A. Huston, *The Sinews of War: Army Logistics 1775-1953* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History United States Army, 1966), 378-9.

2 2nd Australian Division Administrative Memorandum, 1 February 1917, AWM 25, item 21/10; Papers of Major Keith Officer, 3 DRL 2924, section 1, AWM.

reserve to the line or support, it would collect boots from the drying room and the battalion moving to the reserve positions would place theirs in the drying room. At the same time, this last battalion would be given a hot drink from the soup kitchen.[1]

These kitchens were located close behind the front line and from here hot food and drinks in hot boxes would be sent up nightly to the men in the front line. For breakfast, the men would cook some bacon and make tea. They were strictly warned against using water from shell holes or any source which had not been judged safe by the sanitary officer for this latter purpose. Their lunch would simply be tea with bread, jam and cheese.[2]

When the men moved into support, they would normally be taken to the divisional baths and, after washing, be given a new issue of underwear. It was hoped that the men would be bathed once every seven to ten days.[3]

The Battle

The whole purpose of the administration of an army is to enable it to win battles, and this discussion now turns to study the types of arrangements made by an army in the field before a battle. Of course, many of these arrangements were made under the direction of the British if they were not actually made by the British. In this section we will refer most often to the Battle of Messines as a basis of analysis but features of other battles will also be included.

Planning for a major battle could take some time. In the case of Messines the British spent a year driving shafts under the German lines into which they placed large amounts of explosives, and the battle began with nineteen huge explosions that destroyed large sections of the German front line. This was unusual, though, as the majority of the administrative preparations began only some weeks before the battle.

Normally, the troops who would spearhead the attack were withdrawn from the line, rested and trained for their part in the coming

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid, Bean, *Official History Vol. III*, 126.
3 Officer, 3 DRL 2924, section 2 AWM.

assault. As the British became more skilled in their craft, they took more care with training as is indicated by the records of the 13th Battalion (which performed carrying duties on the day of the actual attack, 7 June 1917, but held the line from 9 June) show that it had spent the previous 56 days out of the line training. While the daily program for this training would be prepared by the unit concerned, reflecting recent trends, before Messines Plumer's staff distributed training manuals they had prepared and the various units trained in accordance with the manual's requirements. As well, Plumer had ordered a large scale model of the battlefield to be produced, and officers from the various units visited this before the battle and learned the key features of the ground they were to attack. While this training was going on, a large number of officers had left their units to attend special courses that were either directly or indirectly connected with the attack.[1]

In some cases, units would be training some distance from the site of the battle and they would have to march for several days to bring them close to their staging positions. An example is the 1st Battalion which made two marches (of 5 hours and 20 minutes and 6 hours respectively) on the two days before they entered the trenches for the First Battle of Bullecourt. During these marches, the men were billeted along the route which required staff planning to ensure accommodation for the two nights concerned. As well, the company cooks would typically cook the evening meal using the mobile cookers on the march, which necessitated normal rations to be available to be collected as necessary.[2]

As the men were being prepared, so too were the guns being collected and supplies of ammunition collected and dumped. For large attacks, it was not sufficient to use only the guns belonging to the divisions, so an army artillery train was collected and readied for the preliminary bombardment. This contained the large guns such as 14" guns and 15" howitzers which were in short supply (in November 1918 the BEF only had four of the former and six of the latter in France). By the time the attack at Messines was launched, Plumer had collected 2,266 guns and dumped 44,000 tons of ammunition in the adjacent area; each gun had a certain amount of

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1 War Diary 13 Battalion, AWM 4, item 23/30; Geoffrey Powell, *Plumer: the Soldiers' General: A Biography of Field-Marshal Viscount Plumer of Messines* (London: Leo Cooper, 1990), 175.

2 War Diary 1 Battalion, AWM 4, item, 23/18/18, AWM.

ammunition allocated to it and this was dumped near the guns for the attack. For 18 pounder guns, 1,300 rounds were stacked, for the 4.5 Howitzers 1,100 rounds and so on. As well, the men had to be given their personal ammunition; for the 3rd Australian Division this amounted to a total of 2.2 million rounds of small arms ammunition and 48,000 grenades of various types. All of this, of course, involved tremendous organisation as gun-pits and artillery ammunition dumps had to be dug secretly at night and camouflaged against air observation, roads constructed, railway lines laid and traffic controlled so the guns and their handlers and the ammunition supply wagons moved at night with a minimum of confusion. The amount of transport needed for this was immense and in the days before the battle an average of 67·5 trains daily brought in this ammunition together with other supplies.[1]

In the weeks and days preceding the attack, the Royal Engineers had many tasks to perform, using a combination of specialists (railway construction troops and pioneers) and fatigue parties detailed from units in the reserve line. Their varied tasks for Messines included road construction and repair for the 7,495 trucks, 1,020 cars, 3,072 motor cycles and 701 ambulances of the corps. Because of the scale of this work, an enormous amount of road gravel needed to be brought up to the lines and on at least one occasion light railways were used to carry ammunition because it enabled more trucks to carry gravel. Other work involved the construction of a large number of gun-pits and ammunition dumps; the laying of 4" pipes for potable water, and the digging of six separate lines of shallow trenches, each 100 yards apart as 'jump-off' trenches.[2]

After the attack went in, any ground taken had to be consolidated and this had to be planned for. Each attacking company had one platoon detailed as a carrying platoon. This was to bring up supplies needed to make the new positions defensible against the inevitable German counter-attacks. Typically in 1917, the ten men of this platoon would bring up two picks and four shovels, 45 sandbags, one roll of barbed wire, 47 Mills bombs, twelve rifle grenades, a Very pistol with its ammunition and five smoke candles.

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1 War Office, *Statistics*, 405; Powell, *Plumer*, 174; AWM 26, box 191/14, AWM; Ian M Brown, 'The British Expeditionary Force and the difficult Transition to "Peace"', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 19:4, December 1996, 90.

2 Powell, *Plumer*, 174; 'Administration Notes on the Operations of the Second Army June 1917', WO 158/3, PRO; 'Training and Employment of Divisions 1918', General Staff, January 1918, OB/1635, 40/WO/5754, PRO.

These were essentially defensive weapons and implements and they supplemented the mainly offensive weapons carried by the attacking sections. Once the attack had gone in, further carrying parties would be detailed to get water and food as soon as possible to the assault troops, because 'an assault followed by hard digging, entails great physical exertion on the part of all the ranks engaged in it'. These men would often carry the supplies up in Yukon Packs — a pack devised by the CEF to enable men to carry large loads more easily. With one of these a man could comfortably carry, for instance, one box of small arms ammunition, three boxes of Mills' bombs (each about 34 kgs in weight) or eight picks (about 44 kgs). At Messines, the divisions each had 400 of these packs to enable the rapid consolidation of the gains made by the assaults on the first day.[1]

Before the battle extensive preparation had to be made for care of the casualties. At Messines, the ground offered little or no cover and was under full observation from the Germans, so the advanced dressing stations (ADSs) and regimental aid posts (RAPs) had to be made shell-proof. Large dug-outs would be constructed behind the lines and especially near each Casualty Clearing Station (CCS). In the preparations for Messines, eleven CCSs were used. Each of these was expanded to accommodate 1,000 wounded and each was reinforced with three experienced surgeons to bring the operating staff up to six. That in the CCSs 2,400 operations were carried out in the first three days of the battle suggests the worth of the reinforcements.[2]

To begin the process of evacuating casualties to the CCS, 80 infantry in each brigade were held in reserve to aid the regular stretcher bearers, giving a total of about 100 per brigade. These took the wounded to the RAP, which was connected to the ADS by trench tramways. From the ADS they were evacuated by ambulance and light railway which took them to the corps dressing stations. As well as this, Plumer arranged that a fleet of motor lorries (from 20 to 30 per corps), fitted with seats, should take lightly wounded men from the front to the divisional rest stations, the corps collecting stations and the CCSs. In one corps alone, 1,200 wounded were

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1 'Instructions for the Organisation & Training of Formations and Units of a Division for the Attack', AWM 25, item 937/23, AWM; 'Administration Notes', OB/1635, 40/WO/5754, PRO.

2 Extracts From the War Diary of G. S. New Zealand Division, AWM 26, 191/1, AWM; 'Administration Notes' , OB/1635, 40/WO 158/3, PRO.

dealt with in this way in the first 12 hours. Men were also loaded onto one of a fleet of ambulance trains — 35 of which were used on the first day. Sixteen of these trains arrived near the front at midnight before the attack and as each was filled and left for the CCS another moved up to replace it. The general plan of this evacuation is shown in the diagrams which accompany the following chapter.[1]

For II Anzac Corps, there were two Corps' Main Dressing Stations which dressed wounds and performed emergency operations. As well, they separated the lightly wounded men and transferred them to the Divisional Rest Stations, where they could be returned to their units much more quickly than if they had been evacuated to the CCS.[1]

A plan of the preparations made before such an attack is shown in the accompanying diagram. From it, one can gauge the intricate planning required before an attack and the amount of construction needed to be carried out by the engineers.

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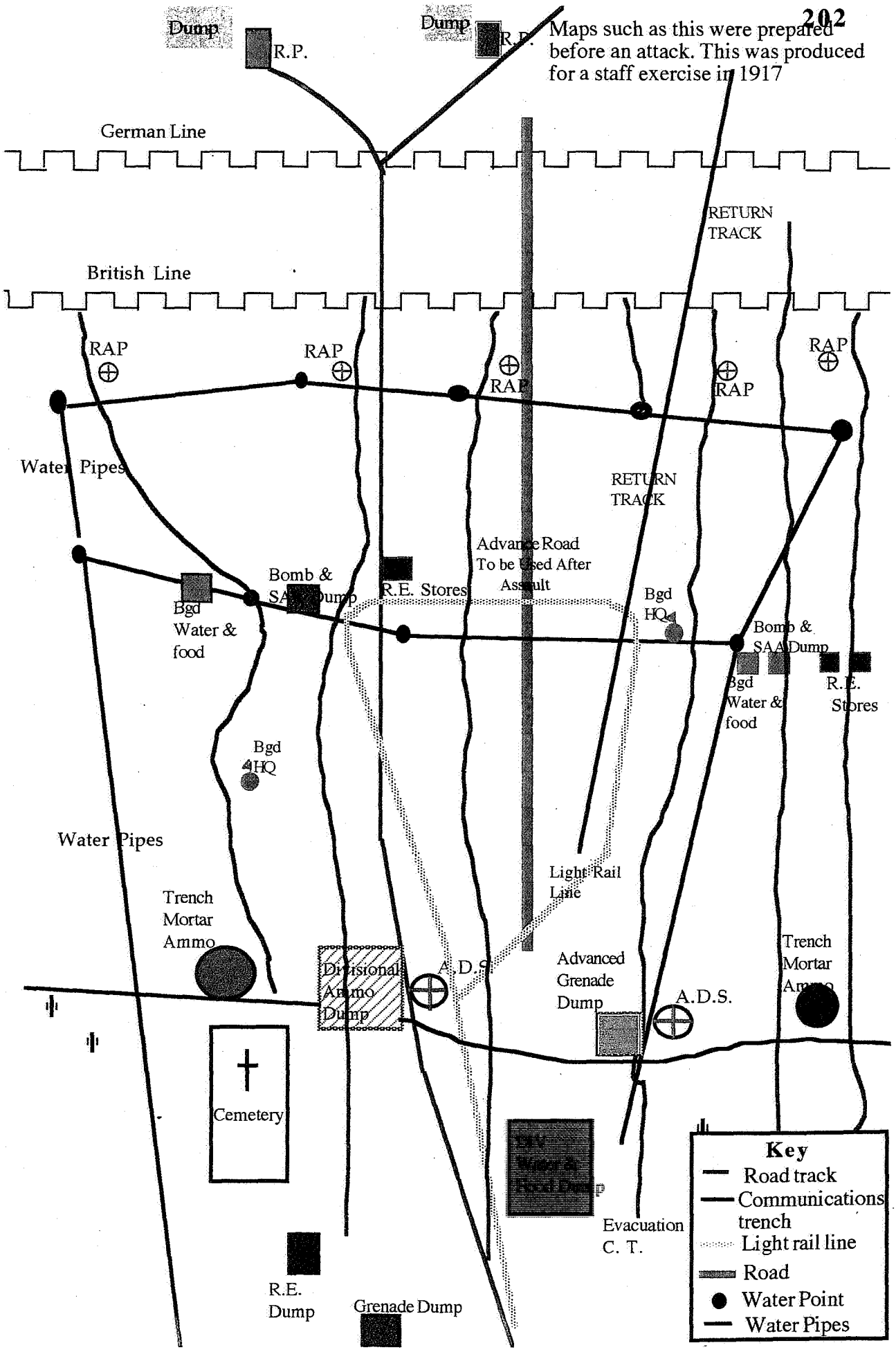
1 'Administration Notes', OB/1635, 40/WO 158/3, PRO.

Maps such as this were prepared before an attack. This was produced for a staff exercise in 1917



During the fighting in 1914 and 1915, the British came to realise that there was a clear need for a military police force in the areas immediately behind the front line. From the Battle of Loos the British learned that they needed a system of traffic control that could be managed only by the military police. From the figures given earlier, it is clear that there was an enormous amount of traffic on the roads in the days immediately before a battle and that, if anything, this traffic became even heavier in the first days of the attack; military police were posted on to roads to maintain one-way systems, to prevent congestion and to give priority to certain loads if this was needed.[1]

It was not only on the roads that the military police controlled traffic. The communication trenches leading up to the line were narrow and long, as much as four miles from the rear to the front. During an attack these trenches would be crowded with carrying parties bringing up a variety of material from tins of water to ammunition and barbed wire, all of which the attacking troops needed urgently. At the same time a constant stream of wounded would be coming back, either walking or being carried by stretcher bearers and the communication trenches also operated on a one-way system controlled by the military police.[2]

On the battlefield, the military police had two functions. The first was to man 'straggler posts' at the rear exit of all communication trenches. During the British retreat in 1914, the BEF found it very useful to have military police in the rear of the army to intercept those men who, for a variety of reasons, had become separated from their units. During battles in the next few years, it was an established practice to have military police man a 'straggler post that acted as a barrier between the killing zone and the rear area'. Here the police would collect men and send them back to their units (often first giving them a warm drink and re-equipping them if this was needed), escort prisoners to the holding cage, help casualties find the RAP, direct those who needed to go there, to the battalion headquarters and, occasionally, arrest men they deemed to be deserters. The second function was to be 'battle police', who were posted in the trenches to ensure that men

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1 G. D. Sheffield, *The Redcaps: A History of the Royal Military Police and its Antecedents from the Middle Ages to the Gulf War* (London: Brasseys, 1994), 62.

2 Ibid, 64; letter, 22 January 1917, Private papers of private A.P.R. Evans, 1 DRL 0269, AWM.

did not remain in the trenches when the attack was launched. These men would be more likely to be regimental police controlled by the unit rather than military police controlled by the corps, and in August 1917, the 3rd Australian division used regimental police to patrol the communication trenches. but the operations of both had to be planned for before the attack was launched.[1]

The Battle of Messines was a great victory for the British and the administrative arrangements worked as well as the battle arrangements. After the explosion of the mines, the BEF troops were able to advance behind the barrage which had been planned and supplied so well. The objectives of the attack were all taken with relatively few difficulties and the process of consolidation proceeded easily despite shelling which grew more intense in the days after the attack. The success of these administrative arrangements is shown clearly in the war diaries of various formations and units which took part in the battle.

The war diary of the CRA of the New Zealand Division stated that 'At no time during the operations was there a shortage of ammunition for the guns, and this in spite of the fact that large dumps at the guns and elsewhere, were almost daily destroyed'. The 2nd New Zealand Infantry Brigade noted that 'the arrangements by which battalions were supplied with all necessary munitions . . . were perfect in the extreme.' It also noted that an officer and one hundred carriers 'never failed in their duty to carry forward at all hours of the day and night under heavy shell fire whatever was required by the fighting men in the front.' The 3rd Australian Division noted in a similar vein

> no hitch whatever occurred in regard to supply, either of munitions or of water and rations. The majority of the men in the forward lines received hot food on the night of Zero day. The success of these supplies rested entirely upon the previous organisation of pack transport on an extensive scale — the evacuation of the wounded was carried out most expeditiously and there was no congestion either at the aid posts or at the ambulances.[2]

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1 Sheffield, *The Redcaps*, 51-8, 65-6; G.D. Sheffield, 'The Operational Role of the British Military Police on the Western Front, 1914-18', in Paddy Griffith (ed), *British Fighting Methods in the Great War* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 74-9.

2 Extracts from War Diary CRA. New Zealand Division, sub period 13-29 June 1917; Report on Operations between the 7th and 18th June 1917, 12-13, AWM 26, box 191/1, AWM;

This lack of congestion is indicative of the efficiency of the medical arrangements, since the division suffered 4,122 casualties in the battle. When the administration for a battle such as this worked well it ensured that military needs were fulfilled and that the troops were well cared for.

The whole concept of administration at the front was a complicated one, both in 'normal times' and in a battle. To the great credit of the BEF and the AIF, this was generally handled well on most occasions; ammunition was taken forward and, if food could not be given to the men because of heavy shelling, they carried two days' 'iron rations' with them for just such an emergency. One constant exception to this usually positive picture was short-term congestion at Casualty Clearing Stations, exhaustion of stretcher bearers and shortages of stretchers, all of which were common on the first few days of a major battle. These, however, were generally beyond the control of the divisional and corps headquarters concerned.

A survey of literature and war diaries for various battles in which the soldiers suffered because of poor conditions (mud during October at 3rd Ypres or heavy shelling at Pozieres) reveals no complaints of shortage of ammunition and few about other administrative matters. The 1st Australian Division after Pozieres specifically stated that despite the heavy shelling, 'the arrangements for pushing forward supplies of ammunition, bombs, food and water were most thorough and there was no shortage or want at any time'. During 3rd Ypres, arguably one of the most extreme examples from the deadlocked period of the war, the conditions did cause problems at various times. We find the war diarist for the 1st Australian Division, remarking on 4 October, when the weather was fine, that 'All administrative services and arrangements worked well', but on the afternoon of 4 October it began to rain so heavily that it turned 'the devastated, drainage-deprived battlefield into a lake' and supply arrangements met with near insurmountable difficulties. The 1st Division war diary was gentle in its summation, simply noting that 'Continual wet weather making supplies of rations, ammunition RE material very difficult'. This suggests both that this was not common, and that the war

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Extract from War Diary 3rd Australian Division, 26 June 1917, 4, AWM 26, box 194/1; AWM.

diarist understood that it took extreme conditions to interfere significantly with the smooth operations of the supply system.[1]

These exceptions to the rule only tend to show how well the overall administration did work. Pozieres and October in Belgium presented conditions that were exceptionally bad and despite this the administrative services performed reasonably well. It is this area that the administrative services showed their greatest successes. working within the established BEF framework, the AIF kept its troops well fed on almost all occasions, no matter how difficult. Virtually never did the men run out of ammunition and the wounded were usually evacuated successfully even under the most trying conditions.

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1 'Report on Operations of the First Australian Division at Pozieres', 7, AWM 26, box 51, item 27, AWM; Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, *Passchendaele: the Untold Story* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 159; War Diary 1st Australian Division A&Q, AWM 26, box 2333, item 3

Chapter 9

Administration of the Medical Services of the AIF

The history of the medical administration of the AIF is a rich and complex one which has to a large extent been covered by the three volumes of the Official History of the Australian Medical Services. This chapter will give a brief survey of only a part of that rich tapestry, and concentrate upon the administration of the Australian Army Medical Corps (AAMC) and the process of treating battle casualties in particular, since the latter posed the greatest administrative, as well as medical, challenge to a recently established medical organisation. This challenge was met successfully by all sections of the medical services of the BEF as was shown by the greatly reduced incidence of disease in the force and by the recovery rates of soldiers admitted to hospitals. This success has been ascribed particularly to 'the efficient organisation of the Royal Army Medical Corps, into whose organisation the AIF Medical Service fitted with equal success.[1]

As with the rest of the AIF, the administration of the medical services was characterised by inefficiencies and poor administration until the Australian government appointed a capable officer to take charge. Bridges did little to organise an efficient administration because, in keeping with his imperial sentiments, he wanted the medical service to be commanded by the British — logically, of course, because he expected the AIF as a whole would be subsumed within the British Army. This was not an unreasonable course of action for Bridges, since the British did handle much of the Australian medical organisation until after the divisions were reorganised in 1916. When this did not happen, it left Bridges, and then Birdwood, with great problems because of the lack of a clear command structure and system of administration. This was not corrected until some time after the AIF reached Egypt.

When Bridges was forming the AIF the Director General of Medical Services in Australia (DGMS), Colonel W.D.C. Williams, wrote to Bridges and requested that he be appointed as Director of the Medical Services (DMS) of the AIF. Bridges agreed to his request, which was at least logical

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1 Geoffrey Noon, 'The Treatment of Casualties in the Great War', in Paddy Griffith (ed), *British Fighting Methods in the Great War* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 87.

because of Williams' seniority and his experience as a staff medical officer in the Boer War, but it was a bad appointment. As Bean later observed, he was 'fifty-eight years of age and of indifferent health'. He did not mix well with the others (including Bean) on the voyage to Egypt, and Bridges soon lost all confidence in him and looked instead for leadership in this important area to the much more personable Lieutenant Colonel Neville Howse, VC.

Howse had joined the expedition late after taking part in the Rabaul landings. As soon as he joined the force, Birdwood appointed him to the staff of the DMS without clearly defining any role for him, and here his personality gained him popularity with both Bridges and the other officers.[1]

Like Bridges, the Australian Government expected the AIF to be absorbed by the British Army and assumed that all medical services for its expeditionary force would be supplied by the British. The War Office soon quashed this assumption when it asked Australia to furnish 'certain line-of communication units' to include a medical service for the division. This meant that Australia had to supply personnel and equipment for a casualty clearing station, two stationary hospitals and two general hospitals. At the outbreak of the war, the Australian Medical Corps had a staff of four officers in the permanent army establishment and 183 officers serving in the militia. These were soon joined by others who enlisted in the AIF, there was no problem in attracting enough nurses and doctors to staff these hospitals, so Australia agreed to the request.[2]

When the first convoy of troops departed for Egypt, it did not include the staff of the hospitals; these did not leave Australia until 4 December, the same day that the first elements of the AIF landed in Egypt. Because he expected that these hospitals would be sent to Britain, Williams did not stay in Egypt to await their arrival, but instead immediately sailed for Britain to make the arrangements for their absorption into the British system.

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1 Colonel A.G. Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918, Vol I* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1938), 21, 33, 42; C.E.W. Bean, *Two Men I Knew: William Bridges and Brudenell White: Founders of the AIF* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1957) , 37.

2 Butler, *Medical Services Vol I*, 27-8; Michael B. Tyquin, *Gallipoli: The Medical War. The Australian Army Medical Services in the Dardanelles Campaign of 1915* (Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1993), 2.

Although this was a logical decision to make in the circumstances, it was to have unfortunate repercussions when the AIF was ordered to stay in Egypt.[1]

While Williams was in Britain and away from the force, disputes arose amongst the medical staff, which greatly hampered the efficiency of its organisation. Some of these disputes came from professional antagonisms developed in Australia, but they were all exacerbated by the very poor manner in which the rank and status of the doctors had been 'adjusted on no very definite basis' when the hospitals were established in Egypt.[2]

These antagonisms and jealousies became most noticeable in the conflict between Matron Jane Bell and Doctors James Barrett and William Ramsay Smith. This began in February 1915 and was not finally settled until August of the same year. There is little need in this work to go into the details of the dispute, which has been dealt with elsewhere, other than to say that it appears largely to have been caused by men with large egos and conflicting ideas trying to impose their views on a woman who was equally strong-willed, but in a less powerful bureaucratic position. Because Williams was in England, and because the lines of authority of the various figures were very uncertainly defined, the conflict simmered and had the effect of disrupting the administration of the medical service of the AIF until it was settled by returning Bell and Ramsay Smith back to Australia and allowing Barrett to resign from the AIF, subsequently to join the RAMC. There is no doubt that it was this case which caused the Governor-General to write to Birdwood in September to complain that 'These doctors seem, many of them, the most ill-conditioned, cantankerous crew that ever got together for the public service'. While these conflicts were taking place, the administration of the medical service was somewhat confused.[3]

If the problem was caused by the egos of the protagonists, initially it was exacerbated both by a lack of clear authority from above, and through boredom initiated by a lack of work for the doctors. The British could do little about the problem because, although the DMS MEF, Surgeon General

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1 Ibid, 43-5.
2 Ibid, 46.
3 This case is dealt with extensively in Jan Bassett and Bryan Egan, 'Doctors and Nurses at War: No 1 Australian General Hospital, Cairo, 1915', paper presented at the Australian War Memorial conference 9-13 July 1990. There is also a great deal of correspondence on the case in CO 616/31, PRO; Novar to Birdwood 24 September, 1915, Birdwood Papers, DRL 3376, item 30, AWM.

Sir R.W. Ford, tried to mediate, he expected the Australians to administer their own force while the Australians seemed to expect that the British would take command by absorbing the medical service of the AIF into the Imperial service. So while Ford was unwilling to take command and Williams was unable to take command because he was not with the force, near anarchy reigned. The Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) was even worse off because it did not even have a matron-in-chief. These were problems that mirrored those in other areas of the administration of the AIF and, like them, they would be sorted out later. Meanwhile the load on the doctors began to increase due to outbreaks of chest complaints and VD amongst the troops, especially in the first three months of 1915.[1]

In these early days, the main work of the medical service was to fight to prevent an outbreak of typhoid fever (which had been a serious problem during the Boer War, in which both Williams and Howse had served), to warn soldiers of medical problems endemic in Egypt and to help the fight against them (the two main problems were malaria and the water-borne parasitic organism, bilharzia), and to try to limit the spread of VD. In the first two of these they were quite successful but, as we have seen, they had limited success in preventing VD.

The work of the medical service in Egypt was centred around four hospitals established soon after the arrival of the medical staff. Number 2 AGH and No 2 ASH were established in or near the Mena House Hotel by the pyramids, while No 1 AGH and No 1 ASH were established at Maadi Camp closer to the centre of Cairo. After some fighting erupted on the canal in January 1915, a casualty clearing station was established at Port Said. The doctors also quickly discovered that dental health was a serious problem in the AIF, and followed the lead of the New Zealanders by establishing a dental section; luckily some dentists had enlisted (one as a medical orderly, for instance), and these were quickly commissioned and set to work on a force in which some 60 per cent of the men needed dental work of some kind.[2]

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1 Bassett and Egan, 'Doctors and Nurses', 5-6; Butler, *Medical Services Vol. I*, 73; 'Medical Administration of the AIF 1914-1916', prepared under the direction of Major General Sir Neville Howse, Howse Papers, 2 DRL 1351, item 61(a), AWM.

2 Butler, *Medical Services Vol I*, 79-80.

Having established the hospitals the medical staff, under Howse's influence, established boards to examine men who might not be fit for active service. Beginning on 26 December 1914, these soon found 173 unfit men, their complaints mainly ones carried with them from Australia. The AIF seized a chance to 'kill two birds with one stone' and sent 169 of these men home on the *Kyarra*, along with 132 others returned for serious breaches of military discipline, such as desertion, assaults upon locals and heavy drinking.[1]

Meanwhile Williams, still in Britain, had found that he was needed in Egypt and after purchasing ambulances and medical equipment arranged to return there. However, by now Bridges had begun moves to remove from the AIF an officer he no longer trusted by recommending that 'since the Australian Imperial Force no longer exists as a single unit', Williams was no longer needed as an attached DMS and should be attached to Army Headquarters. Bridges seems to have succeeded further in having Williams' duties reduced quite substantially and confusing his role considerably, and so substantially reduced his influence in the force.[2]

The War Office now set arrangements in motion for the Gallipoli Campaign, the least successful of which concerned the medical side. As Howse later noted, they 'were so inadequate that they amounted to criminal negligence' and no doubt contributed heavily to the casualties of the campaign, but they were largely British arrangements and so are outside the scope of this work. One of the few areas in which the British consulted the Australians concerned the need for hospital ships to return the expected casualties to Australia. However, these discussions were started too close to the campaign and as it would take between six and eight weeks to fit out a hospital ship, the War Office and the Australian High Commissioner in London, without consultation with Egypt, decided that all Australian casualties would be sent to Britain to recuperate, except for those few who would be fit enough to stand a summer crossing of the Red Sea, back to Australia, on an ordinary troop ship.[3]

It was obvious that once fighting began there would be an acute shortage of hospital beds because those available in Egypt were already

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1 Ibid, 62-3; *Official History Vol. I*, 128-9.
2 Ibid, 66-7.
3 Ibid, 100-101; Howse to White, 20 July 1917, Howse papers, 2 DRL 1351, item 19, AWM.

occupied by sickness patients. Williams, as DMS AIF, authorised the expansion of No 1 and No 2 AGHs to a capacity of 1000 beds and the taking over of the Luna Park amusement centre to be equipped to take all infection cases from the hospitals. On the eve of the landing, these arrangements were completed and added to by siting No 1 ASH on Lemnos, where it was shortly afterwards joined by No 2 ASH.

As noted already, the initial stages of the campaign were characterised by poor medical arrangements. The landing took place at about 4.30 a.m., and it was six hours before the first CCS was established on land and this was soon overwhelmed by the number of casualties and a number of its staff were wounded because of a lack of protection from Turkish shelling. As the day progressed, these problems were exacerbated by a growing shortage of stretchers, which made it difficult to bring the wounded down from the hills. Due to pressure on transport, little evacuation was possible until 5.30 p.m. but 600 men were then evacuated by 8.00 p.m. These evacuees included many lightly wounded men who were sent back to Egypt because pressure of work prevented proper screening of the wounded. This pressure also gave doctors no time to complete the necessary paper-work, and many men were sent off the Peninsula without even their names being recorded. These short-comings were to cause many complaints in the next few weeks and months.[1]

Such problems highlight the greatest deficiency in the medical arrangements for the landing, this being that estimates of possible casualties were set far too low. One is tempted to conjecture that the estimates were made to fit the available transport rather than the other way round. Consequently, when the medical service was flooded with casualties there were inadequate numbers of hospital ships, and various small boats were used to take the wounded to ordinary transports on which they then had to be shipped 710 miles to Alexandria. Meanwhile, No 1 ASH remained unused on Lemnos for the first four weeks of the campaign.[2]

The fate of the wounded who were returned to Egypt was often decided by the ship to which chance allotted them. The initial few days after being wounded were crucial, and Butler makes it clear that a chance posting to a ship just leaving for Alexandria could save the life of a soldier. The

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1 Ibid, 131-70.

2 John Robertson, *Anzac and Empire: The Tragedy & Glory of Gallipoli* (Melbourne: Hamlyn, 1990), 194-5.

other element of fate was the quality of the ship to which he was posted. Some travelled on a properly fitted out hospital ship, others in a 'black ship', which in this campaign meant a transport only basically fitted out to take wounded back to Egypt. The quality of these black ships varied amongst themselves and some were especially poor (the *Lutzow* being notorious). So chance in this way often decided which men lived or died, or who became a cripple or remained whole.[1]

Initially the process of transporting the casualties to a suitable hospital was very haphazard. Originally, all men were shipped to Alexandria. Here they were to be placed in a British hospital immediately if their condition was serious, while less serious cases could be handled in three ways: they could be sent by rail to the Australian hospitals in Cairo; they could be sent to Malta; or they could be sent to Britain. There does not appear to have been any special system about this, as demonstrated by the number of men who were sent either to Malta or Britain and were then found to be fit for service immediately after their arrival. In the case of men sent to Malta, this did not cause great delay, but it could take some months for men to return from Britain.

The arrival of German submarines early in the campaign forced the black ships to leave their anchorages off the beaches, and all wounded (except those likely to return to duty in seven days or less) then had to be sent by small vessels to Lemnos. From here they were sent to Alexandria by large vessels and then later could be sent on to Malta. Still later, they were sent to Malta direct from Lemnos. The planning of the August offensives, however, included a more realistic appraisal of likely casualties, and from August to October inclusive all casualties were first sent to Imbros. Here a form of triage was carried out. Lightly wounded men would rest on Imbros before being returned to Gallipoli. Slightly more serious cases were sent to Lemnos (originally these were defined as men who would need only twenty-one days or less in hospital, but after a week this was changed to fourteen days or less). The most seriously wounded men were stabilised and then loaded on a hospital ship and sent directly to one of Egypt, Malta or Britain.[2]

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1 Ibid, 196-8, Butler, *Medical Services Vol. I* ,169-78.
2 Ibid, 214-20, 378-9.

While the process of evacuation was gradually being improved (largely because of the arrival of more, and much larger, hospital ships), the AIF continued to tinker with the chain of command of the medical service. Bridges had not wanted Williams to act as DMS and, after the former's death, the Egyptian command endorsed this view, recommending in June that Williams be returned to Australia. Pearce agreed to supersede Williams but, rather than require him to return to Australia, ordered him to Britain.[1]

As this decision left the medical service of the AIF without a head, Surgeon General Ford appointed the registrar of the No 1 AGH, Major J.W. Barrett, as his liaison officer with the AIF. It is this appointment which led directly to the troubles with Ramsay Smith and Bell, referred to earlier because Barrett seems to have read more into his role than was intended and his appointment, and the arbitrary decisions which he then made, aroused the ire of the other two.[2]

In Egypt, the huge influx of wounded, as well as the already large numbers of sick, led to an expansion in the size of the hospitals and the establishment of a large convalescent camp at Mustapha on the outskirts of Alexandria. This latter was run by the British and a serious dispute arose between the Imperial and Australian authorities over the treatment of the men. It was started by Lieutenant Colonel C.A.K. Johnston who, responding to his own observations and the complaints of the men, reported that Australians were being treated very badly and were close to mutiny. They alleged that they were not getting adequate care, their clothing was completely inadequate, they were not being paid and were being given few comforts. At least one believed that they were 'being treated as if they had committed a crime in being wounded'. Maxwell reacted very strongly to the report, with which he disagreed, and in turn the Australian government reacted strongly to what it saw as Maxwell's arrogant attitude towards Johnston (whom he threatened to return to Australia) and to Australians in general. The whole affair quickly died away, but its significance lay in the fact in that the Australian government showed that it would not blindly accept British jurisdiction over its men if it felt that they were not being treated correctly.[3]

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1 Ibid, 258.
2 Ibid, 258-61.
3 Johnson to GOC Base MEF, 28 May 1915 and Pearce, 8 June 1915, CO 616/29, PRO; Robertson, *Anzac & Empire*, 202; CO 616/29, PRO.

In other ways the organisation in Egypt became more efficient. Once a system was properly developed, the men were treated much better and their chances of recovery increased. Once the medical authorities had decided to keep a man in Egypt rather than sending him to Malta or England, he was either kept in Alexandria in British hospitals (if the case was serious), or sent by rail to Cairo. In Cairo, he was picked up by an Anzac ambulance (all ambulances in Egypt until August 1915 were Australian or New Zealand supplied), and taken to one of the Australian hospitals where his chances of survival were very good despite the extreme heat in summer. According to Butler, once the men were taken to a field ambulance only 6.8 per cent died of their wounds, and this mortality rate obviously decreased substantially for those who made it to Egypt. This figure is noticeably better than the comparative figure on the Western Front of figure of 7.6%. the Gallipoli figure reflects the almost complete absence of tetanus and gas gangrene in this campaign.[1]

The medical service was not faced with overwhelming numbers of wounded again after the August battles, but the problem of disease now became acute. The men were very tired and stressed and a large percentage suffered from dysentery and related disorders. Bean noted in his diary at this time that of 104 men who had served at Anzac for an average of 125 days, 50 per cent suffered from a rapid and feeble heart beat (over 90 beats per minute), 77% suffered from shortness of breath, 77% were emaciated and 75% suffered from diarrhoea. A comparison with 50 men who had only served an average of 6 days on Gallipoli revealed that only 20 per cent of the latter had an abnormal heart beat (and this was rapid but not feeble), none suffered from shortness of breath or emaciation and only 14 per cent had diarrhoea. Clearly the veterans were weakening and this gave rise to fears that they would be decimated by an outbreak of influenza in the winter, while the diarrhoea rates gave even greater concerns to the doctors.[2]

The doctors were very eager to prevent the onset of typhoid and other fevers that had plagued soldiers through history, and took great care to encourage the soldiers to keep their trenches clean. Despite this, the fly problem at Anzac was immense because it was impossible to find safe sites

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1 Ibid, 199; Butler, *Medical Services Vol I*, 471; Noon, 'Treatment of Casualties', 94-6.
2 Diary entry, 3 DRL 6673, item 148, AWM.

for latrines or to get enough materials to make the deep, open pits fly-proof. The result was that flies bred profusely and spread both diarrhoea and dysentery at a dangerous rate ('for every man admitted to hospital on account of wounds, 17 had been admitted because of disease'), and the control of these remained the principal preoccupation of the medical staff at both Anzac and Lemnos until the campaign ended in December.[1]

During the campaign, the AIF was able to call on Australian nurses as well as Australian doctors, but the nurses' treatment by the AIF and experiences in the war were not equal to those of the doctors. The members of the AANS were all professional nurses (that is, they were not wartime volunteers), and most had been members of the military forces before the war. Largely due to the experiences of nurses in the Boer War, the Australian Government formed the AANS in 1902 as a reserve of trained volunteers to serve in hospitals in wartime. Despite this, the government made no provision for nurses when it mounted the Rabaul expedition in 1914. As a result, the only nurses to participate in the campaign were some who enlisted at dockside when the AIF was fitting out the *Grantala* as a hospital ship. Bassett states that this was 'an indication of the disorganization which characterized contemporary arrangements for the nursing of the Australia's sick and wounded', but it could also reflect the rapidity with which the campaign was mounted. As a foretaste of what was to come in Egypt, no-one gave the nurses any indication of what their status was and the basis upon which they were allocated ranks was very unclear. However, the campaign was so short and uneventful that the nurses experienced few real problems and the AIF was not given any indication that it would need to plan a little more carefully in the future.[2]

Because it learnt seemingly little from this first experience, the AIF inflicted much hardship on its nurses, and the administration of the AANS operated very inefficiently during the Gallipoli Campaign. When the first convoy sailed from Australia, it included 25 nurses, but the subsequent administrative organisation for this body was woeful. Despite all but one of the nurses having served in the AANS for a period ranging from fourteen months to ten years, the AIF did not appoint a matron-in-chief and failed to post a proper seniority list. It also failed to promulgate a complete set of

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1 Robertson, *Anzac & Empire*, 207; Tyquin, *Gallipoli*, 111.

2 Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches: Australian Army Nursing From the Boer War to the Gulf War* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992), 29, 32; Bassett and Egan, 'Doctors and Nurses, 4.

regulations. As a temporary (and probably confusing) measure, the nurses had to work under Imperial regulations that were modified from time to time over the next twelve months until such time as the Australians could formulate their own specific regulations.[1]

Not surprisingly, confusion reigned in the command structure and it is no real surprise that conflict arose between Matron Bell and Doctors Ramsay Smith and Barrett. The whole question of seniority was a vexatious one and it appears obvious in retrospect that a number of nurses were treated unfairly because the system simply did not operate under consistent criteria, and some nurses were sent out from Australia who outranked others who had been in both the Army and Egypt for much longer. This conflict, however, was not the only problem the administration of the force placed upon the nurses.

One that caused a great deal of heartbreak and waste of talented women was the rule regarding married nurses. Throughout the war, nurses were faced with confusing policies on the question of whether they could marry or not. The rule seems to have been that a nurse had to be single or a widow upon enlistment, and that if she married while serving she should resign. However, the rule was inconsistently applied and while some women were married and continued to serve, others were required to resign and were lost to the AIF.[2]

In the actual organisation of the nursing service once the campaign started, the administration of the AIF and the British was again very lax. Nurses were treated by a number of army officers as unwelcome appendages to the force and they suffered badly because of poor accommodation, shortages of boots and clothing, and from over-work. These conditions were most obvious on Lemnos where the commander of No. 3 AGH, Colonel Thomas Fiaschi, and some of his officers treated the women with a 'curious combination of resentment and neglect'. This form of mistreatment was not eradicated until 1916, when the full impact of the reorganisation of the AIF, including its medical service, made itself felt even in the nursing service.[3]

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1 Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, 33-4.
2 Ibid, 39-41.
3 Ibid, 45-52.

The reorganisation of the medical service came as a direct result of a gradually increasing ground swell of complaints about the medical situation which reached Australia from early in the campaign. These complaints came from Generals Godley, Birdwood and Monash, Godley's wife (who helped organise three convalescent homes for New Zealanders in Egypt) and from many ordinary soldiers. These complaints had so alarmed the Australian government that Cabinet decided to send Lieutenant Colonel R.H.J. Fetherston (Australia's acting Director of Medical Services) to the Mediterranean to make a thorough investigation of the situation and report on it to the government.[1]

During this time, strong pressure mounted to remove Williams as the chief of the Australian medical service. The logical candidate to supplant him was Howse, who was popular with his superiors, had a strong military reputation (not the least for his having won the VC in the Boer War) and who appears to have campaigned strongly to gain the position.

Fetherston quickly came to agree with this change soon after he arrived in Egypt on 21 September, largely because he soon became convinced that the medical services were in need of significant reforms. He travelled to the Dardanelles, and met with Howse, and was quickly convinced that the government must appoint the latter as DMS in charge of all Australian medical services under Britain's principal DMS. He told the Defence Department that he had 'found disorganisation and want of consideration in Australian Medical Services due to there being no Australian officer to advise and with authority to act on matters solely Australian'. Both Birdwood and White strongly promoted Howse's cause, White telling Fetherston that Howse was 'a man of judgement, great tact and strength of character', all virtues clearly necessary to stop the bickering that had been a strong feature of the medical service to that time.[2]

Fetherston had some difficulties in convincing the British that this appointment was the correct solution, because the British authorities wanted Howse to serve on the staff of the British DMS as a deputy-director

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1 Robertson, *Anzac to Empire*, 199-204; eg Monash to HQ NZ and A Division, 8 June 1915, AWM 25, item 367/57, AWM; Colonel Springthorpe to Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson, 23 September 1915, Pearce Papers, A4719, bundle 1, folders 1-2, AA; Birdwood to Munro Ferguson, 3 October 1915, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 30, AWM.

2 Fetherston to Department of Defence, 25 October 1915, White to Fetherston, 10 September 1915, Fetherston papers, 3 DRL 251, items 6 & 7, AWM.

for medical services for the AIF. In resisting this suggestion, Fetherston was strongly supported by White, who believed that an Australian was needed to coordinate matters between the AIF, Australia and the War Office. White believed further that, following the appointment, they should lay down clear principles to govern the relationship in order to 'avoid trouble and friction in the future'. Despite the support for Howse, the War Office was slow to agree to the change as long as it continued to give some support to Williams, not realising that Howse was much the more capable. It was not until late in the year that the two governments agreed, and on 22 November Fetherston 'provisionally' appointed Howse as DMS. This appointment was confirmed by the Defence Department in January 1916.[1]

Brudenell White down-played Fetherston's role, telling Bean much later that Fetherston 'was not a serious factor in the appointment'. He continued that Howse was 'essentially a fighting man' who was ambitious but did not pursue those ambitions until he had gained the maximum of battle experience. He then persuaded Birdwood to push for his promotion 'because he saw a definite need and great scope'. If this were the case, and White was indeed in the best position to judge this, then Howse's ambitions served Australia well as he became a very capable DMS for the AIF. Shortly after his appointment Howse returned to Egypt, where he began an active reorganisation of the Australian medical service. Butler is effusive in his praise of the results of this organisation, saying that 'in place of the vague and ineffective direction by an unsupported, isolated and somewhat inactive officer which had resulted in chaos, the AIF acquired a well-organised administrative department, directed by a vigorous and resourceful personality towards clear and definite ends'.[2]

Because the AIF was more than doubled in size at this time, Howse had to expand the medical service overall and appoint officers in charge of the medical services of each of the Anzac Corps. For II Anzac Corps, he recommended Colonel R. Roth of the AAMC, but on Birdwood's advice he recommended Colonel L.L. Manifold of the Indian Medical Service to I Anzac Corps. Howse appears to have been keen to promote the interests of

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1 Robertson, *Anzac to Empire*, 209-10; Medical Administration, Howse Papers, 2 DRL 1351, item 61(a), AWM; White to Fetherston, 15 November 1915, Fetherston Papers, 3 DRL 251, item 7, AWM.

2 Butler, *Medical Services Vol. I*, 478; White to Bean, 14 May 1924, Bean Papers, 3 DRL 6673, item 148, AWM.

Australian rather than Imperial officers, but in Manifold's case he did not follow his wishes as he was forced to accept that there was no Australian suitably qualified for the position at this time. As a further part of that expansion, Howse supervised the appointment of a new matron-in-chief of the AANS, Miss Conyers, and attached dental units to all field ambulances to deal with the chronic dental problems of the AIF. He also established a policy giving preference to those who had served at Gallipoli when he promoted officers to fill positions in the expanded force.[1]

In the period left to it before the bulk of the AIF departed for France, the medical service concentrated on clearing out of the hospitals those wounded left from the campaign and in preventing outbreaks of disease. In this latter task they were generally successful and, except for the huge VD problem, the camps were remarkably healthy, mainly due to the medical staff working hard to improve hygiene, organising a rapid evacuation of any sick men and practising a rigid control over any possible passing on of infections. Important in this process was their supervision of the control of lice, as a part of which the sanitary sections of the AIF disinfected 170,000 kits and 340,000 blankets in a three month period.[2]

Meanwhile, during the previous year, Australia had been building up a medical administration in Britain. When Williams had gone over to Britain in December 1914 he had expected to be asked to establish hospitals for the AIF. He therefore accepted the offer from an expatriate Australian family, the Billyard-Leakes, to be allowed to donate their home as a convalescent hospital for wounded Australians. This was a large house set in 250 acres in Middlesex, which Williams estimated would be suitable for 50 patients in winter and 150 in summer. Harefield House, as it was called, was used throughout the war and grew to a carrying capacity of nearly 1,000 despite its having poor railway access. The hospital was 3 miles from the nearest station, which caused some problems.[3]

As the first wounded arrived in Britain from Gallipoli, they were dispersed throughout the country, although the majority were sent to the Midlands. Initially they were sent to a total of 91 hospitals but later they

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1 Ibid, 481-3.
2 Ibid, 387.
3 'Medical Administration', Howse Papers, 2 DRL 1351, item 61(a), AWM; Butler, *Medical Services, Vol. I*, 492-3;

were concentrated much more. The men stayed in hospital until their wounds had mended, but they then had to move to the Australian Base Depot at Monte Video. Because many of the men who arrived in Britain were only lightly wounded, the Monte Video site was opened only a month after the Gallipoli campaign began, on 29 May 1915.[1]

As the campaign continued, the numbers of Australians in Britain steadily increased. Because convalescing in Britain clearly was better for the men than being kept in Egypt, a policy was instituted by which the wounded would be sent to Britain unless it seemed that they would need more than three months (later extended to six months) to recuperate from their wounds, resulting in a steady stream of men being shipped to Britain. Some of these men returned to Australia in October when hospital ships were available to take them, but the rest were still there when the AIF was transferred to France.

The Medical Service on the Western Front

By the time the AIF arrived in France, the BEF had begun to develop an efficient system of medical administration. This system was further improved during the war until, by early 1917, the medical service was able to evacuate the wounded quickly and send them efficiently to hospitals for further treatment. The medical service of the AIF simply had to fit into this system, which it did with few problems. Early on some administrative decisions had to be taken, but these were settled quickly and this chapter will conclude with a somewhat simplified description of the manner in which the collection, transportation and treatment of the wounded was arranged from late 1916 to March 1918 when trench warfare effectively ended.

One great question that the AIF had to settle was what to do with its convalescents, and three conferences were held in March and April 1916 to decide this question. All but slightly wounded British soldiers were evacuated as quickly as possible from France to Britain, and when the War Office asked the Australian Department of Defence what it wanted for its Australian casualties, the latter decided that it should follow the British precedent and have them sent home to Australia. The British DGMS therefore made arrangements for Australians to travel home through

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1 'High Commissioner's Annual Report 1915', A458/1, item F 108/8, part 2, AA; Bean Diary, July 1915, 3 DRL 606, item 35, AWM.

Marseilles and Egypt. A conference held on 31 March decided that soldiers would be retained in France if they were likely to return to duty in a month or less, be sent to Britain if likely to be fit in three months or less, and otherwise returned to Australia. However, at the instigation of Andrew Fisher, a second conference, and then a third, decided that Australian evacuation should be based on the English model and that Australians would be treated under exactly the same arrangements as Imperial troops, with the exception that those unlikely to be fit for duty in under six months would be returned to Australia.

Within France, the treatment of Australian soldiers henceforth followed the British example. We shall now follow the process by which a wounded man was treated until the time he was returned either to his unit or to Australia. When a man was wounded, he or a companion would dress his wound with an emergency field dressing which all soldiers carried. He would then walk to a Regimental Aid Post if he could or, if he was unable to walk, he would wait for stretcher bearers to take him to the rear. Statistics indicated that normally there were an equal number of walking wounded as stretcher cases and both types of casualties were comparatively light when the troops were occupying the trenches. Of course, during an attack this changed and the unit had to supply a good number of stretcher bearers.

Normally there were 32 stretcher bearers per battalion. At first bandsmen were delegated to this task as tradition demanded, but after the Battle of Pozieres the AIF started selecting specialists because it realised that these men had to be both brave and strong to do their job. They had to have some deeper knowledge of first aid as well since they would often be the first to give attention to the wounded. Normally this only consisted of putting a shell dressing on the wound if it had not already been bandaged, splinting breaks and/or using a tourniquet to reduce bleeding if necessary. Later, another area of specialised skill came in to play. During the war, doctors quickly identified that men with broken thighs almost always failed to survive the shock inflicted by the pain of the broken ends of the bone rubbing together when the men were carried on a stretcher, and so developed the 'Thomas Splint' which stretched and immobilised the limb and reduced 'wound shock'. Stretcher bearers were taught to apply this on the battlefield and this helped to reduce deaths.[1]

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[1] John Ellis, *Eye Deep in Hell: Life in the Trenches 1914-1918* (London: Fontana, 1977), 107; Butler, *Medical Services Vol .II*, 274-6.

Having attended to immediate needs, the stretcher bearers then carried the man to the nearest second or third defensive lines which contained the RAP — a carry of about 600 to 800 yards in normal conditions, but much more during an attack. During the war, some thought was given to this process and it was found that carrying the stretcher on the shoulders was far easier for the bearers. In theory, two men could carry a stretcher, but in practice it could require more, such as at Passchendaele in 1917, the muddy conditions were so bad, Butler said, that 'it took four men to lift a stretcher and ten to carry it more than a short distance'. Monash made the conditions seem even more frightful when he told his wife it took 'sixteen stretcher bearers, in four relays of four men each' to carry one stretcher 4,000 yards.[1]

The RAP was, at best, a dug-out or farmhouse but often it was only a shell hole covered over by canvas. Ideally it had a place for a few stretcher cases and for slightly shell-shocked men to rest before returning to the front. This was the first place where a doctor treated the wounded. His duties were described by one RMO: 'At the R.A.P. in battle the great thing is to get the wounded away — not what you can do for them; fix them up and get them away with a hot drink and a 1/4 grain of morphia — see to the haemorrhage, splint, morphia, hot drinks, and evacuate'. These were the essentials of the RAP: to give emergency treatment to prevent death by bleeding, and to try to prevent the onset of fatal shock, through warmth provided by blankets, food and drink and, if possible, by fires and heaters, before getting the men out of the danger zone.[2]

Having received emergency treatment, the men were carried a farther one to three miles by stretcher to a point outside the limit of enemy field guns. They were then loaded onto light motor vehicles or light railways, taken another three to eight miles (where they were now outside the range of medium guns) and transferred to heavy motor vehicles. At each of the change points they could be given further warmth, food and drinks, the principle being to treat the man, not the wound. In 1918 the Australians introduced ambulance resuscitation teams who would also give blood transfusions at these points.

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1 Butler, *Medical Services Vol. ll*, 274-6, 342-3, 942-5; Monash to wife, 18 October 1917, in F.M. Cutlack (ed), *War Letters of General Monash* (Sydney:, Angus and Robertson, 1934), 202.

2 Ibid, 278, 341, 346.

One of these field ambulance stations would be the Main Dressing Station. Here, again, some medical treatment was applied, mainly to control further bleeding, treat shock, prevent infection and ensure that the men were comfortable and that their details had been recorded carefully. Finally, after a further ten to twenty miles they would reach the Casualty Clearing Station. On average, this journey from initial wound to the Casualty Clearing Station took eight to twelve hours, but it could take anything from four to forty-eight hours. The longer the process took, the greater the chance, of course, of the casualty succumbing to his wounds, or the shock attendant upon him.

For much of the war there were three Australian Casualty Clearing Stations in France, which was slightly below the normal BEF figure of one per division. One, at least, was always stationed behind Australian formations except during the British advance of 1918, but they were also expected to deal with any BEF casualties as well. At the Casualty Clearing Station the men were classified and operated on. In the last years of the war, from 1917, the CCSs were arranged to give treatment as well as emergency aid and transport. They had proper wards, an X-ray plant and a pathology department and were staffed by nurses, radiologists, and surgical and medical specialists. These worked in groups of three or sometimes four but with only one CCS working at a time. It could treat about 150 stretcher cases or 250 to 300 walking wounded cases, and when this number was reached, the wounded were sent on to the next CCS.

On arrival at the CCS, the men were classified through a process called 'triage', with hopeless cases placed in a 'moribund' or 'resuscitation' ward where they were heavily drugged and given palliative care. This was a warm hut under the control of a sister in which the surgeons would circulate between cases. If any of the patients looked as though he had improved, or if the rush died down, he would be operated on. More commonly, they waited for death.[1]

For the others, treatment included excision of dead tissue (essential to prevent death by gas gangrene), primary suturing, treatment of wound-shock, and resuscitation of gas patients, after which most patients were transferred. The doctors retained in the battlefield region only those

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[1] AWM 25, item 173/6, AWM.

wounded who would be fit in a few days or those whose condition precluded them from being moved immediately. The rest were sent away by train to a base hospital.[1]

Australia established three base hospitals in France. Number 1 AGH, at Rouen, originally had a capacity of 360 beds but this was increased to 1,040 in 1917. Number 2 AGH, at Boulogne, had a capacity of 1,500 in 1917. Number 3 AGH had remained in Egypt for a time but was then established in Brighton, England before being moved in 1917 to Abbeville where it had a capacity of 2,000 beds. Sick and wounded were transported to these hospitals by train, sometimes very quickly and taking as little as 48 hours to be moved from front to rear area. In the base hospitals the casualties were given more complex treatment, but again these facilities were viewed as staging points only. Men were treated here but were expected to be transferred fairly quickly, either to hospitals in Britain for specialised and long term treatment, or to the base depot of their division at Etaples from which they would return to their units.[2]

The big difference between the Australian Base Hospitals and the rest of the Australian medical establishment was that these former were much more 'Imperial' in nature. They took in patients of any nationality, and although there was supposedly a policy of trying to place Australians in Australian hospitals, the figures do not indicate that this was adhered to strongly. During the war, only 11.2% of patients in the Australian Base Hospitals were Australian while only 6.5% of Australian casualties were treated in an AGH. Despite this, these hospitals remained under the administrative control of Howse and his staff.[3]

From the base hospitals, those requiring further treatment travelled by hospital ship to England where the AIF was content to see Australians treated by British hospitals, preferably in southern England. After discharge they were then transferred again, this time to the Australian base depot or sent to one of three Australian auxiliary hospitals. Here they recuperated fully or, after being 'boarded' as being unlikely to recover in under six months, were returned to Australia.[4] The following diagrams illustrate this

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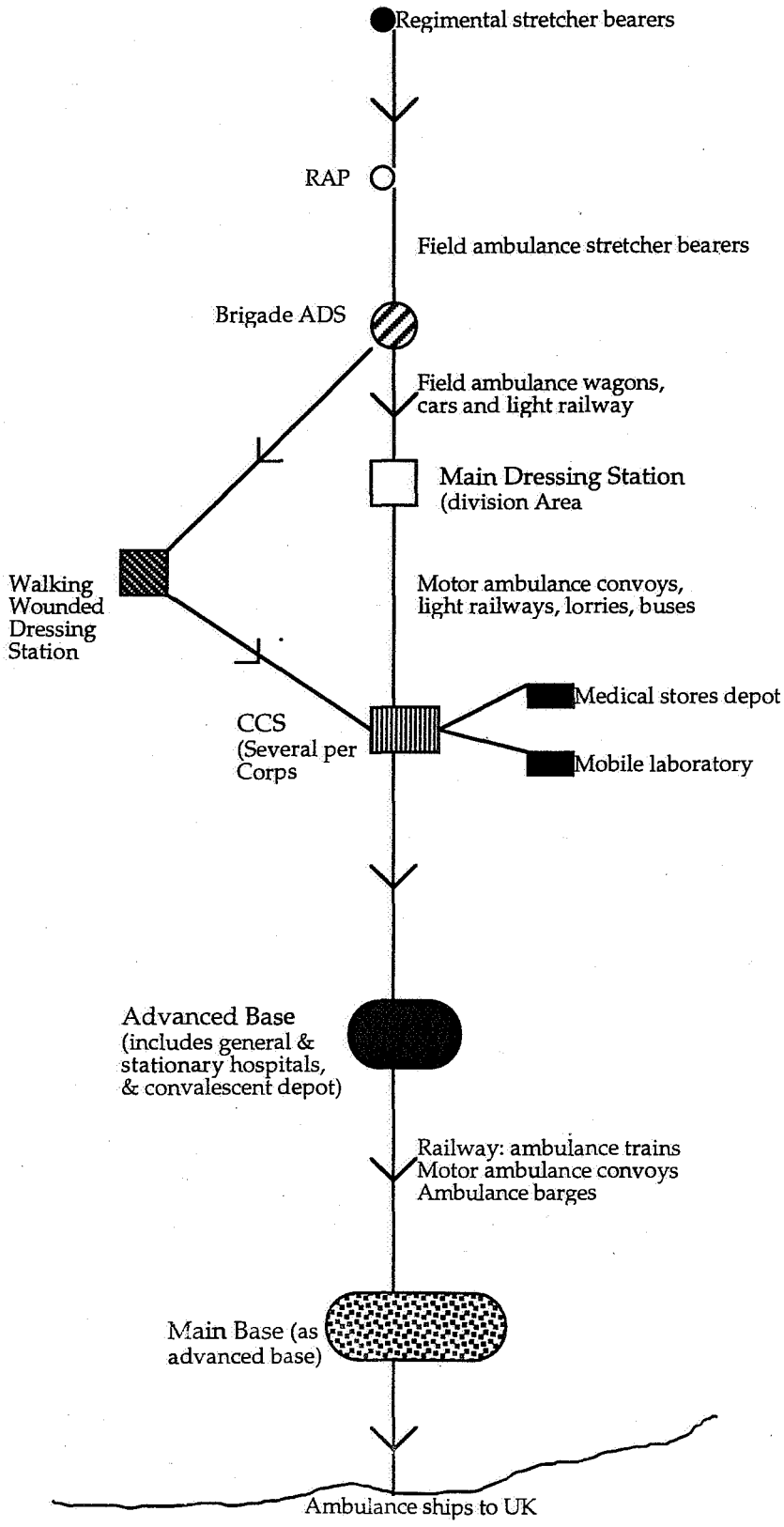
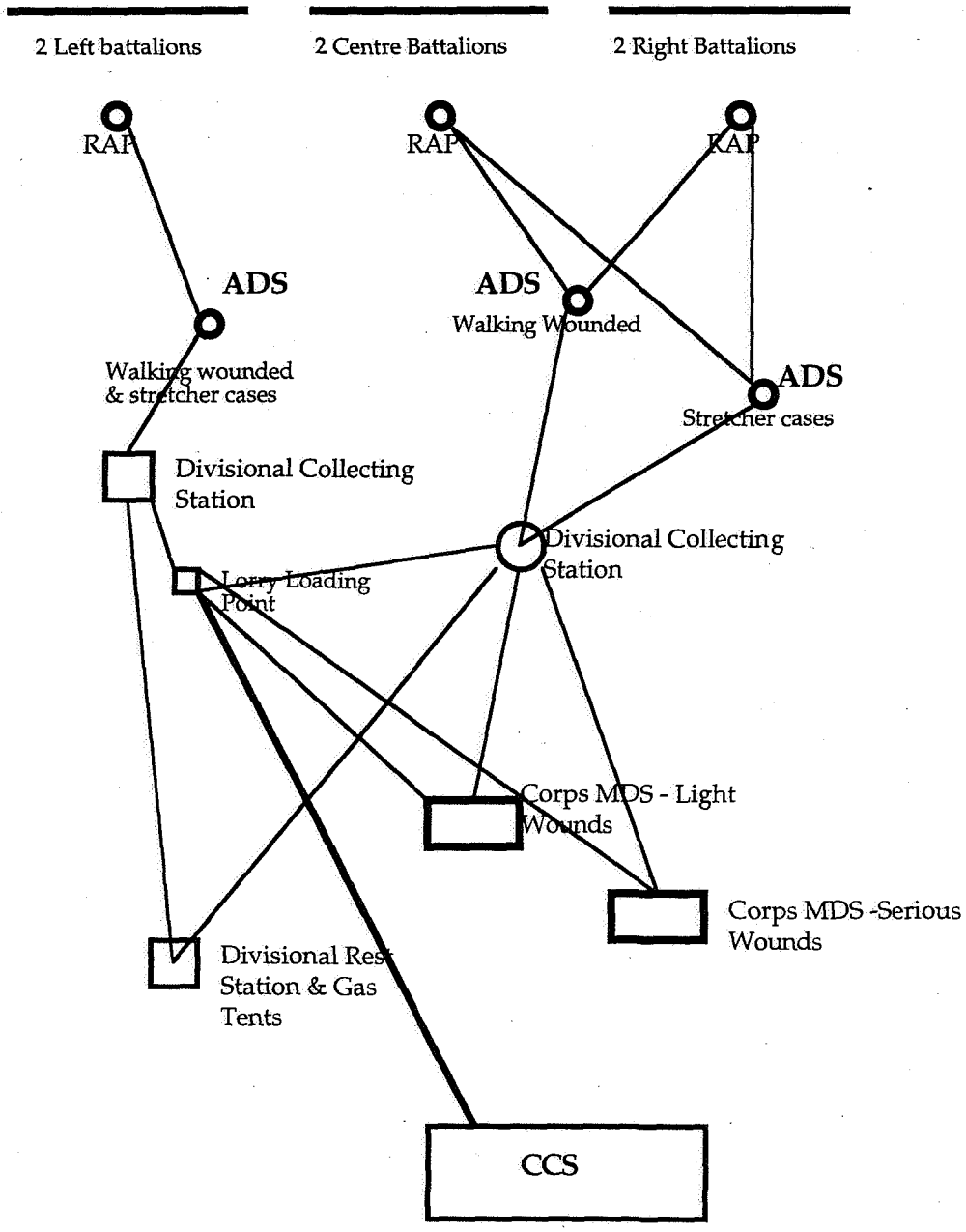
1 Ibid, 300, 359, 379-80
2 Ibid, 405-417.
3 Ibid, 413.
4 Ibid, 428-438.

Stages in Casualty Evacuation

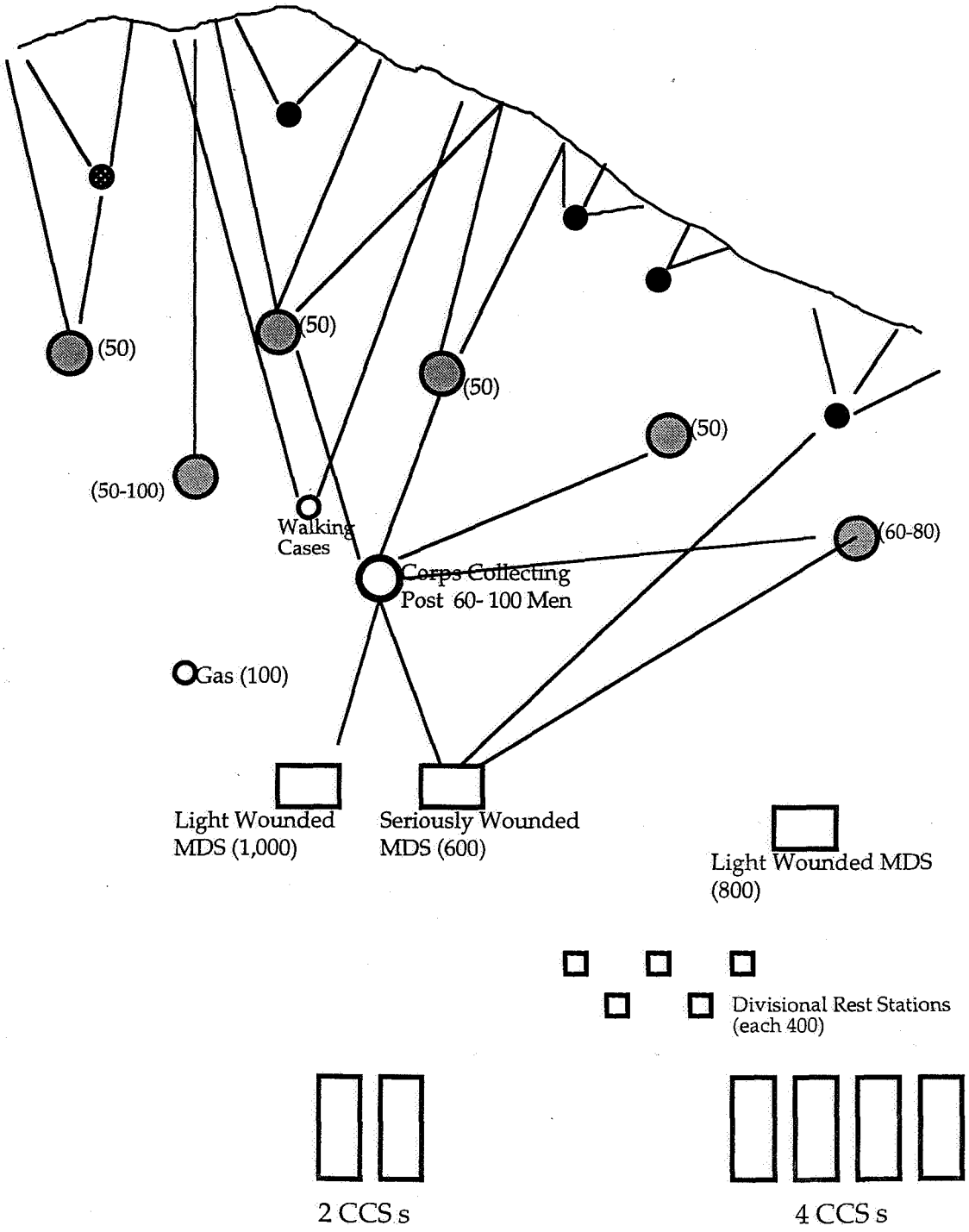


Scheme of Evacuation of Wounded From the 23 Division in the Battle of Messines



Source: Major General Sir W.G. Macpherson, *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents: Medical Services General History Vol III: Medical Services During the Operations on the Western Front in 1916, 1917 and 1918; in Italy; and in Egypt and Palestine* , (London: HMSO, 1924), 135.

Diagram Showing X Corps Plan of Evacuation for Casualties in the Battle of Messines



KEY:

Collecting Post

Advanced Dressing Station (number of men handled)

Source: Major General Sir W.G. Macpherson, *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents: Medical Services General History Vol III: Medical Services During the Operations on the Western Front in 1916, 1917 and 1918; in Italy; and in Egypt and Palestine* (London: HMSO, 1924), 135.

In all, then, the Australian casualty received an efficient treatment from the time he was picked up by the stretcher bearers. The system was devised to reduce casualties and to move them out of the battle area as quickly as possible, to permit partial recovery before being sent to Australia, or rehabilitation before being returned to their units. The system worked well while the Australians were in France, and in the normal course of events there were few problems of the kind that had been experienced in Egypt. There were occasional temporary problems of congestion at Casualty Clearing Stations and shortages of stretchers when casualties exceeded expectations in some attacks such as the problems in moving the wounded off the battlefield during the final stages of the fighting at 3rd Ypres that have already noted.[1]

Not all of those who needed medical treatment were wounded, of course. Living in trenches was not good for the health, especially in winter and at all times a constant stream of men travelled to the hospitals suffering from a variety of illnesses. Influenza (at times, developing into pneumonia) was a constant problem that was especially severe in the 'Somme winter' of 1916 and during the outbreak of 'Spanish Flu' in 1918. Another common problem was trench foot, a form of frost-bite which developed when feet were constantly cold and wet. Allowed to develop, this could result in the soldiers having toes or even feet amputated. It was prevented by constant attention to warmth and water-proofing, and a unit or formation with high trench foot rates was viewed as a reflection on its leader. Birdwood showed this clearly in a letter to McCay in which he stated that the high rates of trench foot in the 5th division must be due to 'bad discipline and want of care'.[2]

Soldiers with medical complaints would report to their unit medical officer (Regimental Medical Officer, RMO) who would eliminate the malingerers (and malingering was a common problem), treat minor complaints within the unit and pass more serious complaints on to a stationary hospital. If the complaint was serious enough, the men would then be transferred out of France to be treated in Britain. The RMO was also responsible for the supervision of unit sanitary sections. These men were

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1 'Report on the Operations of the First Australian Division at Pozieres', p7, AWM 26, box 51, item 27, AWM.

2 Birdwood to McCay, 1 December 1916, Letters of Sir Munro-Ferguson, A479, bundle 1, folders1-2, AA.

responsible for trying to keep conditions clean and to eliminate disease-creating situations. That there were no serious outbreaks of such diseases as typhus and dysentery (despite the number of rats, flies and lice found at the front) which had decimated armies in the past, is a measure of their success.

Again, the treatment of medical problems was as successful as the treatment of battle casualties. This success was due to the British organisation but the dominion forces fitted into this organisation easily and successfully. There can be little doubt that this was due in considerable part to the British system being administered very efficiently by the very capable Surgeon General of the AIF, Howse, from his office in Horseferry Road. As in other areas of AIF administration, the Australians were fortunate in finding and matching a man to a particular situation from relatively early in the war.

Chapter 10

Discipline in the AIF

Discipline within an army is to an extent a function of the administration in that it needs to establish a doctrine, formulate this into a set of laws and practices and to enforce these. As part of the BEF, perhaps the AIF should have been gathered under the general principles of the British Army Act, but it refused to accept this and maintained methods of discipline which remained uniquely its own, different both to the British and the other dominions. The differences appear to have included a tolerance of more informal standards of behaviour and a refusal to implement the death penalty for any offences committed by members of the AIF. These differences probably reflected different national attitudes to the law and to authority but also were swayed by political considerations.

The whole purpose of military discipline is at issue here. To the British regular army officer, discipline had to be rigid and formal if it was to be effective. That attitude is best exemplified by John Baynes, who states:

> Military discipline has two purposes. The first is to ensure that the soldier does not give way in times of great danger to his natural instinct for self-preservation, but carries out his orders even though they may lead to his own death. The object of discipline in this case is to leave no doubt in the mind of any officer or man where his duty lies. . . . when discipline is seen at its best it provides a buttress to support the soldier in his struggle against his own fears. The end should be that: 'the avenue to the rear is absolutely closed up in the mind. Such equanimity is produced by discipline. Stern discipline can manufacture collective discipline.' . . . The only antidote to potential disorder is strong discipline.

He sees the second purpose is to keep order with in the army itself.[1]

Baynes quotes a private in the Guards who wrote: 'The sterner the discipline the better the soldier, the better the soldier, the better the army'. He rounds off this description of British attitudes to discipline's function and methods by quoting from Field Marshal Lord Slim, who stated that

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[1] John Baynes, *Morale: a Study of Men and Courage* (New York: Avery Publishing Group, 1988), 180-1.

battle discipline came from parade ground discipline exemplified by formal discipline and appearance. The AIF did not fit these strictures, yet no-one can argue that it was not a highly successful force (at least in 1918). The AIF was able to achieve battle-field discipline with less recourse to harsh methods of enforcement and rigid demands of compliance than other formations in the BEF. In doing this, it still achieved the key to what Slim saw in discipline — 'the pride men take in themselves and their units and the mutual confidence and respect which exists between them and their officers'.[1]

The AIF presents a contrast; on the one hand, it was a very successful field army but on the other, its discipline was frequently called into question. From the time it was first formed and until the war was over, a variety of people complained about its level of discipline. In marked contrast to this, and perhaps a truer indication of the self-discipline of the Australian soldiers, after 1918, a time when most armies in Europe (including the Canadians) succumbed to periods of intense ill-discipline, the AIF's record was as its highest. This apparent anomaly demands explanation. For the purposes of this work, we most need to examine the question of the disciplinary record of the AIF out of the line, the administrative bodies which tried to enforce discipline and the methods they used. We also need to try to explain why the combat record was so good if the troops disciplinary record out of the line was allegedly so poor.

From the time it was formed, the AIF had discipline problems. In Australia troops were unwilling to accept the kind of discipline that was considered normal in the British Army. Various explanations have been given for this, most centring around Bean's ideas that the Australians had grown up in an egalitarian society which did not accept the disciplinary methods common in the British Army. Thus soldiers, conscious that they were volunteers, would not accept discipline without questioning both the methods and the purpose. To this explanation we can perhaps add the fact that most of those charged with establishing discipline were not regular soldiers (as Gammage puts it, 'they remained incorrigibly civilian'), and so they were more willing to accept the mores of the civilians whom they now commanded.[2]

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1 Ibid.

2 Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1990), 31.

The outcome was that the men were not willing to accept disciplinary rules that they had not helped shape, while officers either agreed with them or were not willing to take a stand over the matter. The logical result of this was that from the first, relatively minor infractions of discipline were rife in the AIF and habits common throughout the war were established. A significant number of men refused to salute officers, they questioned orders, they got drunk and they went absent without leave. When their 'freedom' to behave in this fashion was restricted, at times they rioted. This behaviour was accepted by their superiors either because they had sympathy with it or they did not possess the legal authority or the moral courage to stop it.

From the earliest days in the camps, a pattern was set in many soldier's attitudes to discipline, and the crimes they committed formed a similar pattern for most of the war. The four most common crimes were drunkenness, gambling, various forms of insubordination, and being absent without leave. Further, when they objected to the manner in which they were treated, they rioted, a common Australian vice for most of the war.[1]

In the Australian training camps, the authorities seem to have lacked the experience and perhaps the will to discipline the troops, so conditions remained reasonably chaotic. The worst example of this was early in 1916 when soldiers from Casula, near Liverpool, rioted over poor living conditions and increasingly harsh discipline and work loads, which were themselves a reaction to the existing indiscipline of the troops. A large number of men broke camp and marched on Liverpool where they were joined by more men from the Liverpool camp. They appointed their own leaders and under them the men remained orderly until they were been able to put their case to military authorities. They were listened to and later their complaints were acted upon; Casula camp, for instance, was later closed as a result of this action.[2]

The meeting had little impact on the men's behaviour, however, because it continued to deteriorate. Some rioted and looted shops in

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1 Jeff Williams, 'The First AIF Overseas: 1914-16', Paper delivered to the AWM History Conference, 8-12 February 1983, 3.

2 Ernest Scott, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume XI: Australia During the War* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1936), 230; Gammage, *Broken Years*, 31.

Liverpool. Others, 'drunk on looted beer', travelled to Sydney 'where pickets on Central Station fired into a group of them, killing one and wounding nine'. The government reaction was to blame alcohol for the problem and, after some hesitation, the New South Wales Government brought in a new liquor law and held a referendum which resulted in hotels closing at 6 o'clock, and so started the 'six o'clock swill' which remained a feature of Australian life until February 1955. As a disciplinary measure, a number of perceived ringleaders were dismissed from the AIF. [1]

On the 1st Division's voyage to Egypt, the troops established a pattern of misbehaviour on the transports which, once again, was to last for most of the war. The record of the 1st Battalion was especially bad, amassing a total of 200 offences. These were the common ones of drunkenness, gambling, disobedience and leave breaking (at Albany and Colombo), but also included obscene language and theft. The authorities tried two methods of combating this. The first was an attempt by strong commanders (such as Colonel Braund of the 2nd Battalion) to impose discipline over the men through fines, detentions and fatigues. The second was to ignore the problem. Bridges, for instance, claimed that discipline on the first two convoys was good, despite frequent cases of men absenting themselves from the ship and overstaying leave in Albany and Colombo, and flagrant insubordination towards officers who tried to stop them. Gambling was another such instance, because, while some men were charged with gambling, Gammage cites a letter which indicates that it was both rife and open on board the ships. This view is supported by a photograph of a crown and anchor game being conducted openly on board the *Medic*.[2]

Misbehaviour on the transports continued through the war and the authorities do not appear to have had much success in combating it. Too often the officers on board the ships were inexperienced and, when they tried to curb misbehaviour, their sanctions were too mild. The most frequent charge seems to have been misbehaviour of various kinds in the ports, sometimes resulting in violence, such as in Colombo in May 1915 when men rioted over perceived injustices.[3]

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1 Ibid.
2 Williams, 'The First AIF', 3; Gammage, *Broken Years*, 40-1 and 43.
3 Gammage,*Broken Years*,, 41-2; Andrews, E. M., *The Anzac Illusion, Anglo-Australian Relations during World War I* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 48.

Immediately the AIF arrived in Egypt, it began to earn the reputation for extreme indiscipline which later in the month caused Maxwell to complain that 'The Australians are painting Cairo very red.'[1] The earliest reaction seems to have been to tolerate and excuse their behaviour, much of which, no doubt, resulted from the inexperience of their officers and NCOs. Certainly Maxwell thought this was the case when he again wrote to Kitchener's private secretary on 1 January:

> What with Christmas, women and the drink, the Australians have been rather naughty but they are settling down again. They have far too much money, the officers have little control over their men and the NCOs none but they will improve in time.[2]

A little earlier, Birdwood had recorded his first impression of the Australians to his old chief, Kitchener, and he also commented on their lack of discipline.

> 'The men are absolutely without discipline, and Cairo has been a perfect pandemonium. They are camped at Mena, Maardi and Zetuuan so you see none are very near but this does not prevent them coming in in shoals every evening and large numbers are constantly milling about the streets drunk. [3]

There appears to have been an ambivalent attitude to this indiscipline (which even comes through in the wording of Maxwell's letter of 1 January), which was matched by that of AIF officers. These saw a need to discipline but they appear, at least in part, to have condoned misbehaviour as being due to high spirits, especially if it was only the local population which suffered.

The most common offence was 'absence without leave', and this soon reached epidemic proportions. On 1 January 1916 it was estimated that 200 to 300 of Bridges' division were absent without leave in Cairo, and when between 7 and 8 January Maxwell stopped all leave and then had a

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1 General Maxwell to Fitzgerald, 23 December 1915, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/47, Number 45, PRO.

2 General Maxwell to Fitzgerald, 1 January 1916, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/47, Number 82, PRO.

3 Birdwood to Kitchener, 25 December 1916, Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57, number 64, PRO.

'round-up' of all soldiers in Cairo in which he caught over 200 Australians, but Bridges noted that there were still 61 unaccounted for.[1]

In their 'legal' and 'illegal' visits to Cairo, the Australians committed a vast number of offences, most fuelled by high spirits in both senses of the word. They stole property, including horses, trams and (in one instance) Birdwood's car. They assaulted locals and military police and they got drunk, visited the red light area and, as noted already, they caught VD in increasing numbers. Williams has shown that for the 1st Battalion there were 133 different charges in Egypt, over half being absent without leave and about 10% involving some form of resistance to authority. In all of this, only nine men were charged with offences against the Egyptian population. As he indicates, it is hard to believe that this is the total of such offences.[2]

Andrews suggested that much of the reason for these disciplinary problems (other than the inexperience of many officers) was the absence of an Australian military police force. Because Bridges had not foreseen the need for such a body, in the early days in Egypt (at least until it formed its own force in April 1916) the AIF had to rely on the services of the British Corps of Military Police, whose methods and expectations were totally foreign to those wanted or expected by the Australians.[3]

By February, the commanders of the AIF had realised that the situation could not be allowed to continue as it had. They had already ordered the construction of a new detention barracks at Heliopolis in January and this must soon have been doing a roaring business, with 60 men from the 2nd Battalion, alone, in prison on Boxing Day 1914. Other punishments ordered were field punishment Number 2, stoppage of leave, demotion, fines and extra duties. Training was also made much harder, a picket was placed across the Cairo-Mena road and units were posted to garrisons along the Suez Canal well away from population centres.[4]

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1 Williams, 'First AIF', 5, Letter Godley to Allen, 10 January 1915, Pers 2, Allen Papers, M2/49, NZNA.

2 Gammage, *Broken Years*, 43-4; C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume I* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1921), 128-9; John Robertson, *Anzac and Empire, The Tragedy & Glory of Gallipoli* (Melbourne: Hamlyn, 1990), 39-41; Williams, 'First AIF', 8.

3 Andrews, *Anzac Illusion*, 48-9.

4 Gammage, *Broken Years*, 44, Bean, *Official History I* ,129; Williams, 'First AIF' 8.

This did not solve the problem, so on 3 February, 131 men were returned home to Australia and discharged because of their disciplinary record. Although Bean blamed the 'wasters' in the infantry for the problems, the light horse and the artillery contributed an equal proportion of these men. The reasons for their discharge were published together with their names to highlight the seriousness of the punishment. Bean claims that this was seen as a great disgrace, and being returned to Australia was the ultimate instrument of discipline in the AIF at least until the casualties of Pozieres and conditions in the trenches in late 1916 led the soldiers see it as a reward rather than a punishment. These discharges and the imminent move to battle put a curb on much of the loutish behaviour, although Williams cites figures which indicate that Bean may be wrong. Between 1 February and 5 April 1915, the 1st Battalion recorded 456 offences by its men — most 'related to absence without leave, but insolence, insubordination, disobedience, breaking camp and drunkenness were also prevalent.' It was also on 2 April that a large group of (probably mainly Australian) soldiers rioted in the Wazza area.[1]

This was the last major offence by the first AIF in Egypt before it sailed for active service a few days later (the timing of the riot was not accidental). As it sailed, a different kind of offence was committed by a number of men who stowed away on board the transports not to miss the Australian 'baptism of fire'. One was simply upbraided and added to the strength of his unit, at least two were killed in the fighting, and some were returned to Egypt and fined. This marked something of a turning point, since disciplinary concerns changed greatly on the battlefield[2]

Under the conditions on Gallipoli, offences such as absence without leave were impossible but other offences attracted serious attention. Both in and out of the line, men would be disciplined in a number of ways. The first was self-discipline imposed by the men themselves. Men needed companions in order to survive in combat, and so all had to accept the standards of the group. Thus stealing was accepted, even encouraged, but only for the good of the unit, and much evidence exists of unwary British units or supply depots which lost stores to Australians, who soon earned a reputation as predatory thieves of all they fancied. The next option was for

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1 Gammage, *Broken Years*, 44, Bean, *Official History I*, 129; Williams, 'First AIF', 5-6.
2 Gammage, *Broken Years*, 49.

an officer or NCO to handle the offence unofficially, usually by giving the offender any 'dirty jobs' available. From there the next option was a summary hearing by the offender's CO, who could award a maximum of 28 days field punishment number 2. The next step was a FGCM (Field General Court Martial) in which the commanding officer could impose fines, or one of the forms of field punishment, prison sentences or even sentence a man to death.[1]

As can be seen, there was a scale of punishments available under Australian regulations. Men legally could be fined, have leave cancelled, be reduced in rank, be given extra duties, be sentenced to Field Punishments Numbers 1 and 2, and they could be sentenced to periods of detention. Field Punishment Number 1 'included a soldier being "kept in irons", with both fetters on the feet and handcuffs and secured to a wall or post to prevent escape.' This would be for a limited period during the day, while for some of the rest of the day he would be expected to perform fatigues. This punishment, when imposed by the unit, would commonly be carried out within range of enemy artillery. It was a very unpopular punishment with Australians and there was a common belief that Australians were not subject to it. This was incorrect and Pugsley has noted that 'awards of field punishment were the norm in Australian divisions and it was also common for prison sentences to be commuted to field punishment'. Birdwood claimed that he was reluctant to use the punishment and preferred to sentence the men to detention, at least according to a letter he wrote to the DAG GHQ MEF in February 1916. Godley agreed with Birdwood's view, and further, both he and the DAG agreed that it was not desirable that 'natives of the country' (Egypt) should see Europeans being punished in this way.[2]

There were a number of recorded cases in which Australians released their own men and British soldiers who were undergoing Field Punishment Number 1. They also complained to Andrew Fisher (then Australian High Commissioner in Britain) who wrote several letters to Pearce about this, complaining that it was being done in full view of

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1 Chris Pugsley, *On the Fringe of Hell. New Zealanders and Military Discipline in the First World War* (Auckland: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), 40-1.

2 Ibid, 91, 92 and 101; letters Birdwood to DAG GHQ MEF, 28 February 1916; Godley to DAG GHQ MEF, 17 January 1916, DAG GHQ MEF to Godley 28 January 1916, AWM 25, item 265/5;

passers-by (which was a requirement of the British Army disciplinary code). Birdwood responded (almost certainly incorrectly) that it was done only in a few cases, and then only in private.[1]

Field Punishment Number 2 involved additional hard labour. If the sentence was under fourteen days, the man did it in his unit. The following description ostensibly deals with the NZEF in France, but as its division at that time was part of II ANZAC Corps, one can assume that similar conditions applied in the AIF.

> They would be paraded in full marching order with pack and rifle, morning and evening. Each parade started with the detailed inspection of each soldier's rifle and equipment and with every discrepancy came further punishment. A soldier on field punishment was not allowed to smoke or have his rum ration, unless he was in the trenches, and could not enter an estaminet. He was given all possible fatigues and for each day's field punishment he lost a day's pay. He did at least one hour's pack drill a day and automatically went to the bottom of the leave roster for the United Kingdom and Paris. Nights from 6 pm. to 6 am. were spent in the unit guard room: "The prisoner will only be allowed his blankets and must sleep on the floor; if it is stone he will be allowed straw."[2]

In either form of field punishment, the men could be placed on a restricted diet, including bread and water for three days (maximum). For longer periods, they would be sent to a Field Punishment Camp where treatment could be quite brutal. The Australians quickly saw the need to establish special field punishment camps and constructed one in Egypt, then later opened some in France modelled on a Canadian example. Here prisoners would be supervised by men from another unit, which ensured that they received no sympathetic treatment. Instead, the camps were run with great brutality to ensure 'that prisoners had no wish to come back'.[3]

There were relatively few offences possible on Gallipoli. If one wanted to desert it was impossible to go anywhere, and stealing was not viewed as a crime by the soldiers as long as it was not from one's own mates. In another context Pugsley cites a New Zealander's rules about this:

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1 Pearce to Birdwood, 13 March 1918, Pearce Papers, A4719, item 13, AA; Pugsley, *Fringe of Hell*, 100-101.

2 Pugsley, *Fringe of Hell.*, 91-3.

3 Pugsley, *Fringe of Hell*, 136-7; 93.

'no stealing among ourselves, only from army stores or from officers.' There was one case, however, in which an Australian was caught and sentenced to three months for stealing sugar. Still there was a comparatively large number of courts martial within the two Australian divisions on the peninsula during the campaign, 41 compared to 49 for the four British divisions.[1]

In the eyes of the AIF, the most serious offence that could be committed on Gallipoli was to fall asleep at one's post. Because this could seriously endanger the lives of a soldier's comrades, it was treated as a serious offence even though it was difficult to avoid at times given the intense demands on the physical and mental strength of the troops. In June, Birdwood attacked it as 'an exceedingly heinous offence which might easily jeopardise the safety of the whole force', adding that it could warrant a death penalty. But such a penalty was easy to impose, impossible to carry out.[2]

Australian officers took Birdwood's words to heart and sentenced three Australians to death for sleeping at their post during the campaign, the first on 6 July 1915. Each had his sentence reduced to imprisonment and then suspended. In none of the cases were the officers of the courts martial, nor Sir Ian Hamilton, as Commander in Chief, aware that the sentences could not be carried out. Clearly they were imposed as a warning, although later in the war, two British soldiers were executed for this crime against military discipline.[3]

While they were waiting transfer to Gallipoli as reinforcements, and after their return when the campaign ended, Australians continued to misbehave in Egypt. Munro-Ferguson cabled the British Government that he had had to censor sensational reports about morality and abuse of liquor because he believed that they would have a disastrous effect on recruiting and he urged the British government to do something about it. The War Office ordered the GOC Egypt to 'clear towns near camps of undesirable characters'. This clearly was not a solution. Despite attempts to control bar hours, quality of liquor and prostitution, things did not improve much, and

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1 Ibid, 50; Williams, 'First AIF', 10.
2 Williams, 'First AIF', 10.
3 Pugsley, *Fringe of Hell*, 44-5; Anthony Babington, *For the Sake of Example: Capital Courts Martial 914-18: The Truth* (London: Leo Cooper, 1983), 230.

after their return from Gallipoli, the Australians were based at Tel El Kebir, which was about thirty miles from Cairo.[1]

In the first five days after the return to Egypt, over fifty men from the 1st Division alone went absent without leave or overstayed their leave. Once again the familiar litany of crimes appeared especially when the soldiers were on leave in Cairo. Their behaviour led General Sir Archibald Murray (then Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East) to write a scathing letter about them to Sir William Robertson, the CIGS. He praised their fitness but wrote that he had 'never seen any body of men in uniform with less idea of discipline'. He complained of their drunkenness and noted that of the 8,858 venereal cases treated in Egypt since the beginning of military operations, 5,924 were Australians, while 1,344 Australians had been returned home because of this disease. Murray blamed it on their officers, who were 'unequal to the task and not, as a general rule, respected by their men'. After Gallipoli, most officers did have the respect of their men, so this latter point surely is a misunderstanding based on observing the relaxed attitude to their officers held by the Australians. Murray also blamed Birdwood in part, noting that 'among some of the higher commanders there has always apparently been an idea that the Australian is a person to be petted and allowed to have his own notions as to discipline'. The Australians' lack of discipline, he believed, 'would cause casualties in France'.[2]

Murray sent a copy of the draft of his letter to Birdwood and Godley, both of whom excused their men to some extent and informed him that they were emphasising the need for discipline. Birdwood reported a conversation with Bridges in December 1914, in which Bridges declared that the AIF was made up of men who were very 'socialistic' in their attitudes, especially in their antipathy to saluting, including those officers who came from the same class as the men. He was probably correct in saying this, and the dislike of saluting continued after Gallipoli, but now intensified when Australians encountered British officers. During the campaign the Australians developed an exaggerated opinion of their own worth as

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1 Munro-Ferguson to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 September 1915, War Office to GOC Egypt, 20 September 1915, GOC Egypt to War Office, 21 September 1915, CO 616/46, PRO.

2 Letter, Murray to Robertson, March 1916, papers of Sir Archibald Murray, Imperial War Museum.

soldiers, and lost a great deal of respect for British soldiers, demonstrated by a general refusal to salute British officers, including Murray himself (which probably lent heat to his complaints). Birdwood also stressed the superior battle discipline of his troops and indicated that given conditions on the Peninsula, it was impossible to maintain a formal military discipline. He may have been dissembling here; before receiving Murray's letter, he had already written to all his divisional generals asking them to stress discipline, and emphasising the need to salute all officers they saw. If discipline was not improved, he noted, the AIF might not be sent to France.[1]

The result was a general tightening of discipline. A greater stress was placed on saluting and various commanders attempted to end gambling by raiding gambling schools in the unit lines. To facilitate this, Murray appointed a special Australian assistant provost-marshal to his staff while Birdwood formed the Anzac Provost Corps, which officially came into being on 10 March 1916. If there had been any serious thought of keeping the Australians from France because of their ill-discipline, this was abandoned after the German attack on Verdun and the Australians headed to France in March and April 1916. When they arrived, their reputation had preceded them and they were moved rapidly off the docks and onto trains to avoid possible riots. However, the men's behaviour was excellent and they earned high praise from civic officials in Marseilles. It had been a good beginning to their stay in France, but it was not to last.[2]

Wine was cheap, good and plentiful in France and the diggers drank more than their share of it. The result was another spate of offences, either drunkenness or crimes inspired by it such as insubordination and absence without leave, all of which could lead to a court martial. This court martial was now more likely as well, because in France there was now a greater chance that the men would be caught because military police were much more numerous. Following the establishment of the Provost Crops, there were now divisional military police to supplement the regimental police

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1 Godley to Murray, 24 February 1916, Birdwood to Murray, 25 February 1916, Birdwood to Divisional Generals, 12 February, 1916, Papers of Sir Archibald Murray, IWM; C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume III* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1929), 56.

2 *Official History Vol. III*, 60-2 and 69-73; Williams, 'First AIF', 11-12.

appointed from within the unit, and there were also large numbers of the very unpopular British provosts.[1]

Most offences were committed out of the line. Cowardice, murder and desertion to the enemy were rare in the AIF. Self-inflicted wounds became a growing problem late in the war but were still a rarity in the AIF, with only 701 cases being reported in France. The commonest offences were again absence without leave and drunkenness and charges of desertion began to appear once the AIF was in France. The difference between 'absent without leave' and 'desertion' was usually taken to be one of intent. If the man overstayed leave or left his position to go, for instance, to a bar, he would usually be charged with former. If, however, he left his unit when it was due to go into the trenches or when it was in the trenches, stayed away for more than a day or so or changed out of his uniform, he would normally be charged with desertion because the intent seemed to be more to avoid service. In either case he would be sent to a court martial.[2]

In the 1st Australian Division courts martial increased rapidly and from June 1916 to January 1917 inclusive, they averaged 50 per month. In the 2nd Division they averaged 47. After it arrived in June, the 4th Division, which had a reputation for poorer discipline, average 60 courts martial. This compared with a monthly average in the divisions of the CEF of 31 per month in the same period.[3]

When men were arrested, they were tried by a Field General Court Martial that was convened by their brigade headquarters rather than divisional headquarters, as had been the case in Egypt. This caused problems of inconsistency of punishments and Bean was caustic in his private condemnation of officers who, he alleged, courted popularity by awarding lenient punishments.

Birdwood ensured that if men were sentenced to field punishment they would serve it in the corps' field punishment camp, while Godley was content to see the sentence carried out in the unit. The numbers so sentenced were large, and by 30 April 1918, a total of 2,504 men had been admitted to the corps field punishment compound. It is not unreasonable to

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1 Pugsley, *Fringe of Hell*, 60; Gammage, *Broken years*, 257-9.
2 Gammage, *Broken Years*, 240; Pugsley, *Fringe of Hell*, 64-6.
3 Gammage, *Broken Years*, 240; Pugsley, *Fringe of Hell*, 64-6.

assume that similarly large numbers of sentences were awarded by II Anzac Corps which were served within the corps. Generally, those sentenced to the field punishment compound were habitual offenders so these figures do not indicate a total number of criminals because they must have included a large number of recidivists many of whom were on their last stop before a Field General Court Martial.[1]

The greatest problem for the AIF was the desertion rate and the resultant desire on the part of senior officers to execute some men as an example to the others. The Australian Defence Act of 1903 did not allow Australians to be executed for desertion or refusal to enter battle, but these offences became common, especially after the heavy casualties at Pozieres. To Haig and a number of the senior Australian commanders, the solution to this problem was simple. By executing some soldiers they would encourage the others to remain with their units, because this was 'the only remedy to restrain even disciplined troops in war time'.[2]

Few generals in the British Empire armies had any great problem with the idea of imposing a death penalty since it was after all an accepted part of the civilian code of justice at the time, while the British Army Code incorporated twenty-one offences involving the death penalty in 1914. A number of generals openly advocated it, notably White, who, even in 1909, had advocated bringing Australian 'troops under the Army Act in time of war' (this became the usual euphemism for introducing the death penalty).[3]

As previously noted, no one objected when three Australians were sentenced to death during the Gallipoli campaign[4], and as desertion became an increasing problem on the Western Front, a number of Australians supported Birdwood's calls for the introduction of the penalty and Generals Holmes, commander of the 4th Division, Hobbs, commander of the 5th

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1 Pugsley, *Fringe of Hell*, 101-2.

2 C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume V* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1937), 25; Andrews, *Anzac Illusion*, 103, Pugsley, *Fringe of Hell*, 132, Peter Charlton, *Pozieres, Australians on the Somme 1916* (London: Leo Cooper, 1986), 264.

3 Andrews, *Anzac Illusion*, 49; White to Bridges, 25 March 1909, Blamey Papers, ADFA Library.

4 We should note that theses three men had their sentences commuted.

Division, and Glasgow, commander of the 13th Brigade in May 1917, are just some who supported its introduction.[1]

Australians supported the introduction, but it was from British generals that the greatest pressure came. This started with Birdwood, even before the Australian record began to deteriorate, and it had developed into a full-blown chorus by mid 1917 and never really ended despite lack of success. The senior British commanders, Haig, Robertson, Plumer, Gough and Rawlinson, all tried to get the death penalty introduced. They wrote to Birdwood, the War Office, the Colonial Office and the Australian government and had discussions directly with Fisher, Birdwood and Hughes, all trying to have the AIF placed under the terms of the Army Act. In one of these Rawlinson stated: 'I cannot be responsible for the maintenance of discipline among the Australian troops under my command unless the required alteration to the law is made forthwith'.[2]

They cited pressing reasons for their case, especially that the Australian record for desertion and going absent without leave was a terrible one. Men found it easy to desert from drafts bringing them back to France from training camps or after stays in hospital. Numbers of men also found little problem in getting away from the front, and they did this in far greater numbers than any other group in the BEF. Thus in December 1916, out of a total of 182 convictions for absence without leave in the Fourth Army, 130 were from I Anzac Corps and the record continued to worsen. In the first six months of 1917, the average number of convictions for desertion in the rest of the BEF was 8.88 per division (506 convictions from 57 divisions), but for the AIF it was 34.2 per division (171 convictions from five divisions). From 10 June to 30 June 1917 (the period after the Battle of Messines), three AIF divisions in the Second Army had 63 convictions for absence without leave, while the remaining 22 divisions had 42. In March 1918, partly because they could not execute men and so had to imprison the incorrigibles, there were 9 Australians per 1,000 in prison compared to 1.6 Canadians, New Zealanders and South Africans and 1 per 1,000 British. To

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1 Birdwood to Pearce, 22 May, 1917, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 188, AWM; Andrews, *Anzac Illusion*, 107,

2 Haig to Birdwood, 30 May 1916 and 23 December 1916, Rawlinson to Birdwood, 7 January, 1917,AWM 25, 807/2; Birdwood to HQ, 4 Army, 11 December 1916, Rawlinson to AG, GHQ, 20 December 1916, 7 January 1917, Gough to AG, GHQ, 2 March 1917, Plumer to AG, GHQ, 23 May 1917, AWM 25, item 807/2, AWM; Haig Diary, 28 June 1917, WO 256/17, PRO; Adjutant General to Secretary of State for the Colonies 14 August 1918, WO 32/5484, PRO;

try to convince the Australian government to introduce the death penalty, Birdwood argued that the desertion figures were influenced by men who knew that the death penalty would not be applied to them. They deliberately deserted fully expecting that any sentence they received to be remitted after the war.[1]

Although pressured by the campaign, the Australian Government refused emphatically to alter its position. In June 1915, a question was asked in Parliament about a rumour that an Australian had been shot in Egypt, and the Government in reply emphasised that this could not happen without the sentence being confirmed by the Governor General, and that a report would immediately have been submitted to the minister 'in order to prevent such rumours which have a bad effect on recruiting'. The core of the Government's refusal to allow executions in the AIF was shown here: it was worried about the impact an execution would have on recruiting. When the campaigns for executions were most strenuously pushed by the British, the Australians were either facing an election in May 1917, or a plebiscite over conscription. Naturally the government saw that any executions would be disastrous to its cause and so, although it agreed with the idea, the death penalty was not introduced.[2]

Despite this, Australian courts martial continued to award death penalties until the end of 1917, after which they virtually stopped, with only one being passed down in 1918. In all, 121 Australians were sentenced to death by Australian courts martial during the war, the overwhelming majority of which were for desertion (104 cases). Given that courts could not order men to be executed for desertion, they had recourse to several other solutions. The first was to award Australians life sentences rather than the 10 to 15 years more commonly awarded to New Zealanders and Canadians, and the Australians were less likely to have their sentence suspended. In May 1918 Birdwood came up with two new ideas. One was to advise his commanders discretely to remove from the line any man whose nerve

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1 Cable, Secretary of State for the Colonies, to Australian Governor General, 2 February 1917, CO 616/68, PRO; Cable, Secretary of State for the Colonies, to Australian Governor General, 23 August 1917, A3934/1, item SC15/10, AA; Haig Diary, March 1918, WO 256/17, PRO; Gammage, *Broken Years*, 259-60; Birdwood to Munro-Ferguson, 31 March 1917, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 30, AWM.

2 Report from House of Representatives, 3 June 1915, A2 1916/3670, AA; Pearce to Birdwood, 20 September 1917, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 237, AWM; Andrews, *Anzac Illusion*, 108.

appeared to have gone, thus removing them from the dangers of desertion from the line. The second was to publicise in Australia the names of all men convicted of desertion. He gave adequate warning of his intention to his troops, and then began to announce names in March. This caused some discussion in Parliament, but the government supported Birdwood and justified it as one means of punishing the men concerned.[1]

Birdwood's changed method did not succeed in curbing unruly behaviour in the AIF and the Australians' record for the latter part of 1918 was quite bad. They were frequently charged with absence without leave and desertion and many were charged with looting. In June 1918, for instance, the Fourth Army reported an average of 408 absentees each week; of these, 326 were Australians. Gammage suggests that while some might call the looting legitimate scavenging or souveniring, few captured Germans managed to keep their possessions while French property was also unsafe, even in towns behind the lines such as Amiens. The Australian record was also blackened by gangs of deserters who lived behind the lines and survived through theft and gambling. The worst cases were of armed bands freeing prisoners from police escort, and several murders, including a particularly brutal one of a French civilian.[2]

In another case, an Australian was accused of murdering a French civilian in October 1918 and the British attempted strenuously to have him tried by the French since the Australians would not be able to sentence him to death. He was eventually sentenced to prison by an Australian court martial and sent home to serve his sentence in Australia in late 1919. In the end there were only three Australians executed during the war. Two of these were Australians serving in the NZEF who were found guilty of desertion and shot in October 1916 and August 1917. The other retains strong elements of mystery because a serving member of the AIF, who committed a murder on an Australian base, was tried before a British civil court and sentenced by it to death.[3]

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1 Birdwood to GOCs Australian divisions, 21 May 1918, Fisher Papers, NLA 2919, NL A, Birdwood to Munro Ferguson, 1 May 1918, Birdwood Papers, 3 DRL 3376, item 34, AWM; Report of Proceedings in Parliament enclosed to Secretary of State for the Colonies, December 1918, CO 616/77, PRO; Pugsley, *Fringe of Hell*, 133-5.

2 Extracts of Weekly Return of Events for June 1918 (Fourth Army), WO 32/5484,PRO; Gammage, *Broken Years*, 239 and 273-4;

3 DPS to AG, 6 December 1918, Churchill to Hughes, 23 January 1919, Haig to War Office, 19 February 1919, Hughes to Churchill 21 March 1919, WO 32/5484 PRO; Pugsley, *Fringe of Hell*, Chaps 8 and 13.

On 27 November 1918 a Lewis gun instructor at Sutton Veny Camp, Lance Corporal J. Verney Asser, shot a fellow corporal as he lay sleeping in his barracks in the camp. He was not tried by a military court, but at the Wiltshire Assize in Devizes instead. He was provided a defence lawyer by the Australian Government, but was found guilty of murder and sentenced to be hanged.

Asser had been a Staff Sergeant Major in the regular instructional staff in Australia who stowed away to Egypt in December 1915. There he was struck off the strength of the Commonwealth forces and allowed to enlist in the AIF in March 1916. He had been admitted to hospital in July 1916 suffering from 'mental derangement'. He had several minor charges against his name while he served in France and had a number of bouts of illness before being classified B1a and sent to Tidworth, where he instructed on the Lewis gun before being posted to Sutton Veny as an instructor in October 1917.

Asser claimed that the victim, Corporal Durkin, had committed suicide by shooting himself with a Lewis Gun. However, the prosecution evidence was that the weapon was cleared after firing, and that it had been fired some five inches from the head of the victim, who was lying in his undisturbed bed with the blankets drawn up evenly around his chest. All of these eliminated the possibility of suicide. Asser had given conflicting evidence at an inquest which found that Durkin had committed suicide, but the prosecution showed that this evidence omitted important facts and contained discrepancies with the testimony of other witnesses. Although it could give no real motive for the crime, its argument, that the crime could only be suicide by Durkin (which was impossible) or murder by Asser, must have convinced the jury. It returned after an hour and a half with a guilty verdict, upon which the judge sentenced Asser to death and he was hanged some five months later.[1]

The case is a mystery because there is no explanation as to why the Australian Government permitted Asser to be tried by a civilian court, especially as in 1918 they did allow not this in other murder cases. Perhaps it was because Asser committed the crime in England and might technically

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1 Information from the above all from the file AWM 10 item 4304/9/75, AWM.

be considered not to be on active service. Later generations would serve under status of forces agreements and these would have determined the status of such as person as Asser but as these did not exist in this war, it is difficult to understand how it was decided to try Asser under civil jurisdiction.

There is not much to be said to compare the AIF and the CEF on the question of discipline. Both fitted their administrative framework into that of the British system of justice, but significantly the Canadians had a vastly superior disciplinary record and they executed their own men during the war. Twenty-five Canadians were executed during the war, 22 for desertion, two for murder and one for cowardice. The details of their cases are summarised in the table overleaf.

Canadians Executed During the War

Name	Year	Previous sentence for desertion	Previous absences	Fighting record	Criminal record	Unit's record for desertion at time	Support from Superiors
Auger F	1916	No	four - from trenches	?	?	Bad	?
Wilson J	1916	No	Yes	Bad	Very Bad	?	No
Butler A	1916	**Murder**					
Arnold F	1916	•1					
Roberts J	1916	•2					
Laliberte C	1916	No	No	Good	2 minor offences	Bad	Yes
Reynolds E	1916	No	No	OK	No	Bad	•3
de Fehr D	1916	**Murder**					
Young E	1916	No	No	OK	5 minor offences	?	Yes •4
Kerr H	1916	No	?	Very Bad	?	?	No
Higgins M	1916	No	No	OK	1 minor offence	?	No
Perry E	1917	No	No	OK	OK	Yes	No
Carter H	1917	Yes	Yes 3 Offences	Bad	Bad	?	No
Comte G	1917	•5					
Lalancette J	1917	•6				Bad	
Sinicky D	1917	•7	No	OK	No	?	?
Alexander W	1917	No	No	Good	No	?	•8
Moles T	1917	No	Yes - 6 offences	?	Very Bad	?	•9
Fairburn E	1918 •10	No	No	?	Good	?	No
Welsh C	1918	Yes •11	Yes	Very Bad	Bad	?	No
Dagasse A	1918	No •12	Yes 13 Offences	Very Bad	?	?	No
Lodge H	1918	No •13	No	•13	Excellent	?	No
Delisle L	1918	No	Yes	Very bad 17 offences	Very Bad	?	No
Fowles S	1918	Yes •14	Yes	•14	•14	Bad	•14
Ling N	1918	Yes	Yes	Bad	Bad	•15	No

Notes

'OK' means that the record was satisfactory.

A Yes in the column 'support from superiors' means that his superiors recommended that he should not be executed.

•1 Not with unit when deserted. Found in civilian clothes in Boulogne. Case not reviewed by Canadian authorities.

•2 Not with unit when deserted. Found in civilian clothes in Boulogne after four months absence. Case not reviewed by Canadian authorities.

•3 OC and Brigade commander did not want him executed as previous executed man (above) had come from same unit and was executed four days before Reynolds was tried. Divisional corps and Army commanders thought case was a very bad one that warranted execution.

•4 Brigade report missing, divisional commander did not want him executed, Corps and Army disagreed.

•5 No records available but his evidence in court indicated that he had committed at least one other similar offence.

•6 No records available. He had managed to get back to a base port.

•7 Convicted of cowardice. No record of the recommendations of his superiors is available.

•8 No record of the recommendations of his superiors is available, however, he was a sergeant who behaved in a particularly cowardly manner so he is unlikely to have been supported by anyone.

•9 No record of the recommendations of his superiors is available.

•10 Deserted April 1917 before Battle of Vimy. Not arrested until nine months later.

•11 Was under suspended sentence of death when he deserted for the last time.

•12 Dagasse had deserted in April 1917 (prior to Battle of Vimy) and had escaped when arrested. We can assume that his battle record was very bad.

•13 Deserted in November 1917 (before operations in Passchendaele) and twice escaped after being arrested. On one occasion he managed to conceal himself on board a ship due to sail to England.

•14 Had previous charge of desertion proved against him for which he had been sentenced to death, sentence commuted to 10 years penal servitude. He had served six months before being sent to his unit on a suspended sentence. He had been taken by armed escort to his unit immediately before deserting the second time. In his unit a number of

men had been released on a suspended sentence after being found guilty of desertion and had then deserted again.

- 15 Ling had been previously convicted of desertion and sent to prison. When sent back to his unit, he failed to report and instead absented himself for over ten months. The GOC 1st Canadian Division stated; 'I consider that the effect upon the battalion of pardoning twice a man sentenced to death would render it difficult to ever enforce the extreme penalty.'[1]

It is significant that five of these twenty-five were enlisted in the 22 Battalion, the only French-Canadian battalion in the CEF, a proportion much higher than the average for Canadian battalions. Jean-Pierre Gagnon has investigated these cases and his conclusions indicate a degree of unfairness in the treatment of the men concerned.[2]

He accepts that their trials were fair and that they were not shot because they were French or Francophones, but believes that these did disadvantage them. In their trials they were given a translator, but he could not explain the nuances of language and attitude which distinguished these soldiers from the members of their Anglophone court martial. This meant that they found it harder to argue justifications which could have led to their sentences being commuted. It was a situation unique to the CEF, that a group of men served in the field army who differed so markedly from their peers, and, as such, one for which the CEF should have made provision.[3]

While bearing that in mind, if we analyse these figures certain patterns to the executions become obvious. The two murder cases seem obvious targets for a death penalty. What we do not have is a record of those convicted of murder who were not executed so we have to be careful making any definite conclusions about the impact on Australians if the death penalty was applied to Australian murderers, but it is probably safe to say that several Australians would have been executed for murder if the Australian Government had been willing to let the penalty be applied.

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1 MG 24, vol 2538, file HQ S-1842, vol 2 NAC.

2 Jean-Pierre Gagnon, *Le 22e bataillon (canadien-français) 1914-1919: Etude socio-militaire* (Ottawa et Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1986), 300-1.

3 Ibid.

Twenty-two Canadians were executed for desertion. Nine of these had previous convictions for this offence and three of these had been sentenced to death on a previous occasion. Clearly it was dangerous to ignore such a drastic warning. Three of those who had not been convicted previously of desertion had a number of convictions for absence without leave and a further two had a bad criminal or fighting record. Again, these seem to hint at an attempt to warn others in the unit that a man's bad record made desertion a dangerous crime. Finally, three had made it back to a base port (two in civilian clothes), two had escaped after re-capture and one had managed to remain a liberty for nine months before he was captured. Again all of these would have been factors that prejudiced the authorities against the men concerned. What is most significant is that where we know it, the record of every man's unit for desertion at the time of his conviction was bad. This indicates clearly that despite British assurances that the AIF would have control over any executions in its force, in cases where the British felt that an example was needed, they would ignore the wishes of the man's immediate commanders and would have executed a number of Australians, 'pour encourager les autres'.

Chapter 11

Demobilisation

We have shown that the administration of the AIF developed, after initial difficulties, into a very efficient organisation, but it was in the successful and peaceful execution of the demobilisation of the AIF that the administration of the force reached its greatest heights. This emerged despite a slow and disorganised start, hampered by confusion and political interference. Then, once the war was over, the AIF found itself faced with competition for transport from other forces equally anxious to get their men home as quickly as possible and from governments anxious to resume peace-time levels of world trade. In overcoming these difficulties the administration of the AIF reached new heights, a monument both to the AIF and the man recognised even by his detractors as a superb administrator, Sir John Monash. His success was demonstrated best by the absence in the AIF of outbreaks of mass disorder such as occurred in other armies after the war.[1]

By November 1918 the AIF was a tired force. It was conscious of the great part it had played in the successes of 1918 but it was ready to finish with war. There were obvious signs that discipline in the AIF appeared to be breaking down (mainly a number of minor mutinies in some units trying to avoid being disbanded and amalgamated with another unit). These portents of trouble were overcome by the removal of the AIF from the fighting in October followed by the armistice in November, which brought with it the prospect of return to Australia. Unfortunately, the AIF now found itself without a plan to bring about this return.[2]

Some thought had been given to the difficulties of demobilising the troops but little had been done to develop solutions. Perhaps optimistically, given that it was in the middle of the Somme battles, the Army Council held meetings in August 1916 to discuss the problems that would be associated with demobilisation. It perceived that the greatest problem would

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1 C. E.W. Bean, *Two Men I Knew* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1957),182; Murdoch to Hughes 20 May 1918, Murdoch Papers, 1538/23/103, NLA; Monash to wife, 11 March 1919, Monash Papers, NL 1884, box 127, NLA.

2 C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume II* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1924), 875-6, 933-4.

be caused by a lack of transport, and that this would be exacerbated if the dominions decided that they wanted to return their men home from England rather than directly from France. In December of the same year, the council wrote to the various dominion governments to ask their opinions on the matter, urging them to realise that there would be real problems during demobilisation and that they should plan for them early.

Probably because he had been given details of these meetings as early as September 1916, Anderson had expected this communication. He informed the Defence Department of the Admiralty's view that it would be months after the war before it could make even a few ships available and it would therefore take twelve to fifteen months to get the men home. According to Bean, he also discussed the problems with Brudenell White who began planning for demobilisation in December 1916. However, not surprisingly, given that the Somme offensive had petered out and no end appeared in sight for the war, there is little evidence that anything concrete came out of this.[1]

This was not the case in other armies. The Canadians had made a start and by the spring of 1917 were working on details (albeit 'spasmodically'), and at least did persuade 22,000 dependants of the CEF to go home to Canada. The British also began to work on a scheme, a copy of which was sent to Australia on 27 March 1917. As part of this planning, they began grading every man in service to give him some order of priority for demobilisation, based chiefly on his pre-war occupation, war-service and marital status.[2]

During 1917 the AIF made some desultory attempts at planning, although it was not until 1918 that it began to do anything to approach the constructive beginning its allies had already made. In June 1917 AIF HQ in London began discussions with the War Office, leading Birdwood to cable the Australian Government on 13 November 1917 to ask it for its repatriation proposals. He received no satisfactory reply despite repeated

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1 Discussion papers, August 1916 and December 1916, CO 532/88 and 532/89, PRO; GOC AIF UK Dispatch # 39 to the Department of Defence, 5 October 1916, Anderson Papers, PR 83/20 AWM; C.E.W. Bean, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Volume VI* (Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1942), 1054.

2 D. Morton & G. Wright, *Winning the Second Battle* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 104; A2487, item 19/3700, AA; *Melbourne Herald*, 26 February 1919, collected in A3934/1, item SC 15/9, AA.

cables from Horseferry Road, and nothing was done beyond Griffiths (then GOC AIF HQ London) recommending in December that Australia should form a Demobilisation Committee.[1]

During the early months of 1918 a start was made, possibly due to the urgings of White who now stressed the need for planning to overcome the transport problems that he had been aware of since 1916. On 16 February Griffiths appointed one of his officers, Major G. Sherington, to organise a Demobilisation and Repatriation Section although it was not formally constituted and did not begin its work until 9 April. Two tasks loomed as being most important: the first was to gain some statistical information about future employment possibilities from the troops, and the second was to determine the order in which the men would be returned home.[2]

The first was necessary so that the government could gauge the types of pressures likely to be placed on jobs in Australia and also so that some scheme of education and training could be implemented in England while the soldiers were waiting for repatriation. But the government refused permission for the men of the AIF to be required to fill in forms stating their employment preferences. If the Australians were to adopt the British scheme of repatriation by trade (as it probably intended at this time), these forms were vital to the establishment of repatriation priorities. Requests for permission were made in April and June with no result, and a third request in August resulted only in a sharply worded reply from the Repatriation Department that a decision would be forwarded by the Department of Defence when the government arrived at one.[3]

Much of the problem was caused by political jealousy on the part of the Minister for Repatriation, Senator E.D. Millen who had served as a Minister for Defence before the war. Millen was not willing to let other departments interfere with his portfolio, and it appeared that the word 'Repatriation' in the title of the new section at Horseferry Road led him to believe that the Department of Defence was encroaching on his area of control. Bean later wrote of Millen's attitude:

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1 Letter to Department of Defence 14 December 1917, AWM 25, item 245/70, AWM;*Official History Vol. VI,* 1054; Letter to Department of Defence 14 December 1917, AWM 25, item 245/70; AWM.

2 Ernest Scott, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume XI* (Melbourne, Australian War Memorial, 1936), 825; AWM 25, item 245/70, AWM.

3 *Official History Vol.* VI, 1055.

> At present Millen's jealousy has gone far to prevent Pearce and the AIF from drawing up a proper plan of demobilisation because they cannot decide how to classify men and send them back to Australia without trenching [sic] on questions of repatriation and Millen will not allow that.[1]

As the situation had not improved as the war reached its climax, Hughes, then in London, felt compelled to wire W. A. Watt, the acting Prime Minister, in October that Millen and Pearce should settle their differences and to ensure that there would be only one authority over the scheme. Monash indicated later his awareness of this difference of opinion when he addressed a meeting of his senior officers. He commented that the government had seen the problem posed by demobilisation coming under two departments (Defence and Repatriation) and so had made Monash the representative of both departments. It was a clumsy solution but it evidently placated Millen as the problem did not recur after the Armistice.[2]

Having seen the implementation of the survey delayed by the Minister for Repatriation, Horseferry Road now found that the troops were often unwilling to fill it in because they feared that their pre-war occupation could be used to reduce the service pensions to which they believed they were entitled. Hughes also delayed the process because he insisted that the form could not be issued until it included a question asking the men if they belonged to a trade union. AIF HQ eventually bowed to the pressure and this question was included in the final version of form 534 although the men were not obliged to answer it.[3]

In asking this question, Hughes was trying to forestall problems. He needed to know who was, and was not, a unionist for the purposes of the 'Non Military Education scheme (NME) that he was advocating. As part of this, he wanted to send Australians for practical experience in British factories. Because British unionists would object to Australian non-unionists being given work experience in union factories this question was designed to help avoid problems by ensuring that the AIF only sent unionists to union factories. By the time this was resolved, however, the

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1 Entry 14 October 1918, Bean Diaries, 3DRL 606, diary 117, AWM.
2 Fitzhardinge, *Billy Hughes*, 352; Speech 28 November 1918 AWM 25, 245/7, AWM.
3 A2487/1, item 19/362, AA; Entry 7 November 1918, Bean Diaries, 3DRL 606, diary 117, AWM.

AIF was trying to solve a far more important problem, the order in which men would be sent home.

The question of priority for demobilisation was one that greatly troubled all the dominion governments as well as the British themselves. The British were the first to try to devise a scheme and in the summer of 1916 appointed Edwin Montagu to head a body to investigate the question. The Demobilisation Subcommittee of the Cabinet Reconstruction Council (as it was called) produced the 'Interim Report of the Demobilisation Priority Committee' in March 1918, and copies of this were sent out to the dominions. The Australian government received its copy in October 1918 along with the Montagu Report which outlined the conclusions of the committee.[1]

Trying to avoid the problems that had followed the ending of the Boer War, the committee recommended a scheme devised to minimise economic dislocation and mass unemployment in Britain after the war. It called for men to be demobilised in the order in which they would be of most use to the country. The first to be demobilised, the 'demobilizers', were those whose services were essential to expedite the demobilisation of everybody else. Next were those whose rapid demobilisation would lead to the creation of jobs for other men (those in this second class were called 'pivotal men'). The government saw that the early demobilisation of the men in these two classes would arouse jealousy in others and it emphatically stipulated that their number was to be strictly limited. Within each group, priority would be given to married men. Their priority, in turn, was decided by their length of service. The latter two criteria were used to determine also the order of preference for those men who were not classified as demobilisers or pivotal men.[2]

The British had been working on this scheme for some time and in October 1917, Haig, having heard the details, wrote to the War Office and pointed out that the scheme was seriously flawed. He stated that the pivotal scheme would result in indiscipline and jealousy and advocated that repatriation should be based upon length of service overseas. This was the

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1 Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), 288; S.R. Graubard, 'Military Demobilisation in Great Britain Following the First World War', *Journal of Modern History*, xix, 1947, 298.

2 Ibid.

scheme eventually adopted. The British, however, failed to take heed to Haig's sound advice and adopted the scheme as did the Canadians to a certain extent. This decision was directly responsible for most of the unrest that both these forces experienced immediately after the war.[1]

The great problem with the scheme was that not only was it unfair, but that it was obviously unfair. Men who had served for the full period of the war were unlikely to have jobs waiting for them, especially those from the lower middle and the working class. Experienced soldiers (often volunteers) remained in the services while less experienced conscripts were demobilised. It is not surprising that violent demonstrations against the scheme soon broke out in both the BEF and the CEF.

The unrest in the CEF was exacerbated because it adopted another suggestion from the British (largely at Currie's urging). When they presented their scheme to the dominions, the British had suggested that these forces be demobilised in complete units. Their idea was that this would make discipline easier because the troops would be under the command of their own officers and it would also make transportation easier. A further benefit that occurred to the authorities later was that it would also facilitate the occupation of Germany.

The Australian Government did not adopt these suggestions but was slow to make up its mind on what methods it did want used. Although waiting for a decision, at least the AIF was able to begin some planning. In July 1918 Birdwood had recommended that either McCay or Moore be appointed Director-General of Demobilisation and Repatriation, but was told that such an appointment was not necessary at that time. This was not only due to a short-sighted refusal on the part of the Australian government to see a need, but also because the government saw neither man as suitable to head such an important department. McCay was very unpopular in the AIF and in Australia, and Moore had antagonised Hughes during the second referendum campaign because Hughes believed that he had not done enough to swing the soldiers' vote his way. The rejection of Birdwood's recommendations meant that the only department in the AIF

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1 Haig to Secretary of the War Office, 3 October 1917, WO 32/5241, PRO.

which was working actively on schemes that would be important in the coming months, was the education branch.[1]

In 1918, the idea had begun to grow that the AIF should make some attempt to provide an education for its soldiers before they returned home from the war. This stemmed from a system of training given to wounded men before they were repatriated to Australia, an education which intended to give nothing other than simple rehabilitation through vocational training. The intention was expressed by Millen in August 1918 when he stated that 'The purpose of this department is not to provide for the education (other than vocational) of returned soldiers, but to secure their re-establishment in civil life'. This attitude contrasted strongly with that of the Canadians who had founded their 'Khaki University' (originally the 'University of Vimy Ridge') in December 1917 as an instrument of educating all soldiers.[2]

The Canadian scheme was the principal model for the Australian education scheme which was devised in early 1918 by Bishop and Brigadier General G.M. Long, a noted clergyman and educator from NSW. Long had done intensive research into his scheme and he intended that it would provide a broad spectrum of education, ranging from university study to practical education in farming and trades. Men would receive instruction both within their unit and in English universities supplemented, where applicable, by practical experience in factories and on farms. He was authorised to look for instructors and by September had selected a number of men who were withdrawn from their units and given a refresher course as preparation for their being sent back to their units as teachers. Long's ideas now, however, had to face their sternest critic, Billy Hughes, who was in England and beginning to cause great problems for Birdwood and his administrative officers.[3]

Before Hughes had left for England, Cabinet had decided that there should be a civilian rather than a military administration in charge of repatriation, believing that a military administration would soon become

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1 Cable, Birdwood to Defence Melbourne, 14 July 1918; Reply, 6 August 1918, A3934/1, item SC 15/8, part 1, AA.

2 Senator Millen refusing to send representatives to the Conference on the Education of Returned Soldiers and Their Dependents, A2483/1, item B18/4300, AA.

3 *Official HistoryVol. VII*, 1062-4; Fitzhardinge, *The Little Digger*, 352.

bloated with men who were 'misfits and cast-offs', chosen because they were not wanted in their units. Cabinet also believed that a civilian administration would be more sympathetic to the needs of the soldiers, and that if civilians of sufficient standing were chosen to serve on a Repatriation Council to be established in London (rather than in Australia), its status would better suit it to dealing with the various British government departments that would bear on the complex problems involved in bringing the AIF back to Australia. Here, the prestige of Pearce would be vital and so, despite criticism of his appointment, Pearce decided that he would be on the committee together with 'the capable businessman' W.G. McBeath and a military officer whom he would appoint in London. Pearce laid himself open to criticism by appointing himself to this committee. The administration of the Department of Defence had just been examined by a Royal Commission in 1917 and the Commission's report, which was published in stages through 1918, was interpreted as making severe criticisms of the Department and its minister, Pearce. Pearce, at this time then, probably took the opportunity to escape from the light of bad publicity and to enjoy some of the fruits of victory.[1]

By October it was obvious that the war was going to end in 1918, and Cabinet urged Hughes to make a decision about the time of Pearce's departure for London to take control of demobilisation. However, Hughes procrastinated until it was too late, whereupon he announced that he himself would take charge. Cabinet was forced to agree on 9 November, but directed that AIF HQ should get direction in 'main principles' from Hughes but should 'confer by cable' with Pearce about details. Unfortunately, this instruction seems to have contributed to difficulties between the military administration and Hughes who objected to its cabling Australia without reference to him.[2]

Matters came to a head on 23 October 1918 when Hughes and Dodds had a heated altercation. Hughes tried to order Dodds to act on certain matters without informing Birdwood first. Dodds refused because he would not act without Birdwood's permission while Birdwood had definite

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1 *The Sun*, 27 December 1918; Geoffrey Serle, *John Monash: A Biography* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1982), 407: Hughes to Watt, Pearce Papers, A 4719, bundle 13, AA: Memo from Hughes 28 October 1918, A 3934/1, item SC 15/8, Part 1, AA *Official History* , *Vol. XI*, 279-82.

2 Watt to Hughes, 27 December 1918, Pearce Papers A4719, folders 1-4, bundle 3, AA.

instructions to do nothing about repatriation other than to comply with requests from the Department of Repatriation. Dodds told Hughes that the AIF received its instructions from the Minister of Defence, not the Prime Minister, and would not act contrary to the previous instructions unless Pearce withdrew them. Hughes was not happy at having his authority questioned in this way on this and later occasions and was eventually driven to cable Australia about the situation, even threatening to suspend Birdwood and Dodds if they would not do as he told them.[1]

Cabinet was not all that sympathetic to Hughes' viewpoint and blamed him for the situation because of his delay over Pearce's appointment to London. Cabinet told Hughes that it was obvious that he was over-worked trying to handle demobilisation on top of his other duties and that he should give Monash 'reasonable liberty of action'. However, he seems to have had a victory since Pearce recommended that Birdwood and Monash be instructed to refer all questions of demobilisation and repatriation which needed to be decided in the UK, to the Prime Minister for his decision.[2]

During his argument with Dodds, Hughes had expressed great scepticism about the supposed benefits of the AIF's education scheme to the men and to Australia, telling Dodds that it would have no more effect than 'a camel piddling against a pyramid [would] have in boring a hole in the pyramid.' In all he and Dodds had two hours of bitter dispute over this and the actions of Dodds and Birdwood, much to Dodds' disgust.[3]

Hughes was dissatisfied with Long's education scheme because he believed that it was not a practical solution to the needs of the men nor Australia. He wanted to place men in British industries and in government workshops where they could gain skills that would benefit both them and their country. To prepare for this, he had written to a number of British firms seeking places for members of the AIF, and had received 'hundreds' of favourable replies. All that was needed was to gain the approval of the British trade unions (hence his insistence on the question about trade union

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1 Dodds to Birdwood [n.d], AWM 25, item 245/76, AWM; Hughes to Watt, 23 December 1918, Pearce Papers, A4719, folders 1-4, bundle 3, AA.

2 Watt to Hughes, 27 December 1918, Pearce Papers, A4719, folders 1-4, bundle 3, AA; hand-written note by Pearce on telegram sent by Hughes 23 December 1918, Pearce Papers, A4719, folders 1-4, bundle 3, AA.

3 Dodds to Birdwood [n.d], AWM 25, item 245/76, AWM.

membership on their information document). As well, he suggested that men could be sent to Denmark to study dairy farming and to the United States to study a variety of mechanical trades and new farming techniques.[1]

The system that was finally adopted did contain a number of Hughes' ideas but not all. He was persuaded that the British could not use their government workshops to train Australian troops since they had enough difficulties in training their own discharged soldiers, and British factories were able to supply only a small number of positions for the same reason. It was also found that many Australians were not willing to delay their repatriation while they trained in the United Kingdom. Despite these problems, there was much enthusiasm within the AIF for the education scheme (Bean stated that the men were 'pathetically keen about it'). A system developed which combined non military education (which was essentially vocational training) and some general education which was designed mainly to keep the men from getting bored while they waited to be repatriated.[2]

Because of these problems and the slow beginning, little had been achieved by the time the war ended. A census of the AIF was carried out in October 1918, but this only emphasised the size of the problem. There were 154,550 soldiers (a figure smaller than it might have been because of Hughes' insistence on home leave for those who had enlisted in 1914), 4,365 munitions workers and 9,820 dependants waiting to be repatriated. This number of dependants was to be swelled by the wives of soldiers who married after the war (6,748 in 1919 alone). It was obvious that the AIF would have problems repatriating this number quickly, especially as so little had been accomplished before the ceasefire and shipping was in short supply.[3]

Although they had made some earlier planning, the Canadians were little better off than the Australians. They also were still debating the best method for repatriating a large number of people (their eventual total was 267,813 soldiers and 37,748 dependants as well as 24,753 Imperial soldiers who chose to move to Canada) and like the Australians, they faced difficulties in getting enough ships. In returning their men, the Canadians

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1 Hughes to Watt, 2 November 1918, A3934/1, item SC 15/8, part 1, AA.
2 Diary entry, 7 November 1918,' AWM 3DRL 606, Diary 117, AWM.
3 Repatriation and Demobilisation Statistical Returns, A2487/1, item 20/992, AA.

had the advantage of a shorter travel time home, but this was nullified to some extent by the fact that they had about twice as many men as the Australians and had problems of internal transport. In winter Halifax and St John were the only ports that both remained open and could handle the transport vessels but the rail systems connecting these to the rest of Canada were in such a bad condition that only 20,000 passengers a month could leave from Halifax and 10,000 from St John.[1]

These transport problems would delay demobilisation but the government was not unhappy about this initially because, like Hughes in Australia, it was worried about the impact on the economy of the return of such a large body of men. The situation was much worse in Canada because the men would be returning in the depth of the Canadian winter (always the worst time for employment in Canada) and at a time when a quarter of a million employees were being retrenched from the munitions industry following immediate post-war cut-down of what had been an extremely large production. The Canadian Overseas Ministry then, had to take account of these problems, and also of the fact that two Canadian divisions would form part of the Army of Occupation in Germany. Kemp was also hampered by disagreements with Currie which obscured the chain of command in planning for repatriation.[2]

The Australians at least were not burdened by this latter problem, and moved quickly to appoint a Director-General who was to administer the scheme. It was expected by many that Australia would chose Brudenell White for this role, if only because he had instigated what little planning had been done. Acting on this assumption, once the Armistice had been signed, Birdwood sent White to England where he met with Sherington and his staff and began to formulate the plans that he had first contemplated in 1916.[3]

Hughes, however, wanted neither Birdwood (he thought Monash more able) nor White (possibly because he had followed ambition by accompanying Birdwood to the Fifth Army) and instead called Monash to London and appointed him Director-General of Repatriation and Demobilisation AIF. White subsequently had a private meeting with

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1 Morton and Wright, *Winning the Second Battle*, 112.
2 Ibid., 109; RG 24, 1846, file GAQ 11-43A, NAC; MP 367, item 535/4/628, AA.
3 C.E.W. Bean, *Two Men I Knew*, 180.

Monash and offered him his services, but Monash made it plain that he was not wanted. Clearly it would have been very difficult for two such senior officers to be associated in the scheme, but White was obviously surprised by the decision. Bean indicated the depth of White's surprise by recording that as he came out of the meeting looking shocked, he replied with a swear word when asked what had happened — 'this from a man who did not swear', but he soon accepted the decision and he and Monash remained on good terms.[1]

Monash's first task was to formulate the order of priority for demobilisation. He was guided at first by decisions that had been made already and initially favoured the idea of returning pivotal men first, these to include managers, bankers, pastoralists and miners and also elderly men. At the same time, however, he specified that the remainder of those who had enlisted in 1914 and those who had enlisted in 1915 would be returned as soon as possible. He did not agree with Birdwood's recommendation that married men should be returned first which was also one of the bases of the Canadian scheme. Finally, he acceded to Hughes' wishes that the process should be delayed to lessen problems in an economy readjusting to peace-time conditions.[2]

In early November Hughes expressed the desire that demobilisation should be restricted to 10,000 men per month, to be increased to 15,000 per month after three months. He was worried about the massive dislocations that would occur in the labour market if he returned men more quickly, but he was also conscious that failures in the repatriation of the troops would result in an unfavourable result in the election that was due to be held soon after the war. However, he soon changed his mind about returning the men home slowly when he realised how unpopular this idea was with the men themselves, and in correspondence with Sir Joseph Maclay, the Shipping Controller in the UK, was most insistent that the AIF should be returned as soon as possible. He emphatically rejected the idea that Australia had ever

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1 Ibid., 181; Geoffrey Serle, *John Monash: a Biography* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1982), 373.

2 Demobilisation papers, A3934 item, SC 15/8, part 2, AA; minute, 24 October 1918, AWM 25, item 245/70, AWM; Morton and Wright, *Winning the Second Battle*, 109-10.

considered the idea of only wanting a limited number of men repatriated each month.[1]

His new urgency was soon communicated to Monash who also began to demand a rapid return for the troops. To facilitate this, he had to come to a final decision about the manner in which the men would be returned. Based on a decision of Cabinet, he decided that repatriation would be by units but that the order of return within the units would be based on the length of service of each soldier. Having made this decision, he devised a workable scheme which was perceived generally to be fair to all members of the AIF.

The Canadians, on the other hand, adopted a compromise that was to prove a failure. Currie was determined that the fighting soldiers would be returned in complete units and, influenced by the belief that the Australians were doing the same thing, the CEF adopted this as the basis of its scheme. Currie claimed that it was the 'unanimous wish of the Corps'. He had argued that this method would be the best suited to maintaining discipline, that it would ensure there were no shortages of essential services for the men remaining in Europe, and that when the army arrived in Canada it would be able to hold the grand parades that its successes warranted (or as he expressed it: 'The soldiers want to return by units and to march home as a conquering army with colours flying'). To accommodate Currie's desires, Kemp decided that the fighting arms of the CEF were to return from France as complete units, while those troops that had been based in England would return on the basis of their region of origin in Canada and their length of service, with married men having priority over single soldiers. This was an unsatisfactory compromise which was not in accord with the wishes of the soldiers (who wanted demobilisation to be determined solely on the basis of length of service) and it led to problems.[2]

On 26 November Monash described his far more satisfactory scheme to a meeting of senior officers, and laid down many of the principles which were to ensure its success. He stressed that they had to do the best both for

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1 Hughes to Watt, 2 November 1918, A3934/1, item SC 15/8, part 1, AA; Hughes to Watt, 30 October 1918, A3934/1, item SC 15/8, part 1, AA; Letters exchanged between Hughes and Maclay, 2 January 1919, CP 359, bundle 1/NN, AA.

2 Desmond Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) 180; Currie to Kemp, 23 November 1918, MG 27 II D9, vol 137, file D 29 (a), NAC; Times (London), 6 December 1918, MG 27 II D9, vol 137, file D 2, NAC.

the men and for the country, and that the AIF was going to send the men home quickly, ready 'to take up their duties of citizenship'. He emphasised that the men were already uncertain and confused and that this could lead to unrest, and senior officers were to work to maintain the morale of the men using the education scheme to help them. He undoubtedly expressed sentiments similar to those at a later meeting in which he stated that men in all the allied armies wanted a quick discharge and that this attitude could lead to trouble. He then expressed a heart-felt plea: 'but whatever happens, for heavens sake, do not let it start with the Australians'.[1]

At the first meeting he pointed out that the war was not over and would not be over until after the peace treaties were signed and that the British government was insisting that armies could be not be demobilised until this was done. Murdoch later criticised this stance, pointing out that the British were trying to delay Australian demobilisation while they demobilised 4,000 men a day. In the December meeting, Monash also stressed the need for the commanders to eliminate unnecessary irritations such as keeping the men out in bad weather or sending them on route marches. He indicated that traditional military discipline was to be changed by telling unit commanders to explain to the men why complaints could not be remedied (if this was the case) and not to hesitate to let the GOC know immediately if Corps headquarters was responsible for any problems. It was this sensible approach to the new situation and the application of his quota system which did most to ensure that the AIF did not have the problems of other formations.[2]

The basis of Monash's scheme was his decision to send men home from England in quotas of 1,000 men. Quotas would be selected from the units by the commanding officer on the basis of the length of service of the men, although some men could be held back if the CO felt that their presence in the unit was essential for the demobilisation of their comrades. Men who had compassionate grounds for early repatriation were encouraged to apply for this. At first, Monash asked for the COs' recommendations on this but later he informed them that they could reject

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1 Address given by Monash to Division & Brigade Commanders, 26 November 1918, Monash Papers, NL 1884, box 130, folder 965, NLA; Conference at Corps HQ, 29 December 1918, Blamey papers, 3 DRL 6643, item 5/24, AWM;

2 Address given by Monash to Division & Brigade Commanders, 26 November 1918, Monash Papers, NL 1884, box 130, folder 965, NLA; Conference at Corps HQ, 29 December 1918, Blamey papers, 3 DRL 6643, item 5/24, AWM; *Melbourne Herald*, 28 February 1919.

the application only on the basis of military indispensability, although they could make comments about discipline matters that might make the soldier less deserving of privileges.[1]

This scheme for repatriation of the AIF was not used in Egypt. There, Chauvel and his staff had been given the freedom to choose their own scheme, and they had decided that the Australians in the Middle East would be returned in units. This was felt to be better suited to the conditions in Palestine and Egypt, and London agreed to its implementation. This decision was fortuitous for the British because it meant that when the Egyptian rebellion erupted in 1919 there were complete units of Australian soldiers in a position to be used to help suppress it.

This problem with Egypt was to emerge later, but already in 1918 pressure was being placed on the AIF to return the men quickly. It was willing to do this but was faced with the dilemma caused by the fact that the war was not yet over. Hostilities had been halted only by an armistice and the British wanted to ensure that the armies did not dissolve until the Germans had signed a peace treaty. To enforce this they insisted on the occupation of Germany and required Australia to supply troops to the Army of Occupation.

The question of Australia's participation in the Army of Occupation was one which became controversial years after the war when Hughes and Monash had a public dispute in the pages of the RSL journal, *Reveille*, over the matter. In April 1930 Hughes, replying to complaints that the AIF had not participated in the Army of Occupation, wrote that when men were allocated to occupy Germany, the Australians were omitted. He objected and the CGS gave his reasons to him in a private note (which he could not make public). He implied that the AIF was omitted because he had insisted that Haig should take the Australians from the line to give them a rest (by 3 October 1918) and that the 1914 men should be given home leave.[2]

In May, Monash replied to this by stating that, as a result of a meeting with Hughes on 18 November, he had sent 30,000 men from France to England before he had 'received permission from the War Office to remove

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1 Monash to COs, 7 January 1919, AWM 25, item 245/4, AWM.

2 *Reveille*, 30 April 1930, 8-9; *Reveille*, May 1930, 8-9, in Bean Papers, 3 DRL 606, item 274(b), AWM.

a single man from France'. He believed that it was doubtful that Hughes could have been told by this time that no Australians were to be sent to Germany as 'this decision could not have been reached so few hours after the signing of the treaty'. Hughes disagreed through the *Sydney Daily Guardian*, stating that he insisted that Australians should form part of the Army of Occupation. Despite Hughes' protests, the truth appears to lie with Monash in that Hughes did not want to delay repatriation despite the Army Council's desire to have Australians in the Army of Occupation.[1]

On Armistice Day Hughes wrote to the CIGS, Sir Henry Wilson, telling him that he wanted the Australian Corps to be given a chance to hold a bridgehead over the Rhine now that the armistice was signed. Wilson's wrote back that he was sure the AIF would form part of the Army of Occupation, with the sarcastic rider: 'They won't be too tired?' Hughes was enraged and wrote back immediately to castigate Wilson for referring to the Australians 'in such sneering fashion.' Wilson backed down and claimed to have been misunderstood but also implied to Hughes that the Australians would be going forward with the Fourth Army.[2]

There is no doubt that all of the early British planning was based on the idea that both Australia and Canada would supply a headquarters' staff and two divisions to the Army of Occupation. The idea was mooted in November and the Australian Corps Headquarters accepted that this was intended. Blamey noted that the attitude of the men towards this was mixed. The predominant interest of the men was to return to Australia, but added: 'there appears to be a very decided desire on the part of many to complete the job by setting foot on German soil' but only to visit not to stay long.[3]

In a meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet on 12 December 1918, both Hughes and Borden were asked if they agreed with the retention of two divisions from each of their forces in the Army of Occupation. Both agreed, although Hughes appears to have had some doubts about the reaction in Australia to the proposal to delay the return of the troops, and he indicated

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1 Ibid.

2 Hughes to Wilson, 11 & 13 November 1918, Wilson to Hughes, 12 & 14 November 1918, Wilson Papers, IWM.

3 GHQ orders, 19 November 1918, Papers of Lt General Sir John Cowans (QMG, BEF), IWM; BGGS Notes for the Corps' Commander, 23 November 1918, Blamey Papers, 3 DRL 6643, item 5/24, AWM.

that the Australian population would not agree to it. However, at this stage he was probably happy to have an excuse to delay demobilisation because of the probable impact this would have on unemployment and hence his re-election prospects. Hughes did not withdraw the AIF from the scheme at this stage because on 23 December the Australian Government was informed that it had been settled by the Imperial Cabinet that Australian Divisions would form part of the Army of Occupation.[1]

The situation soon changed because Hughes probably began to realise that the soldiers would be in Germany for some time when they wanted to return to Australia quickly. On 29 December, a conference at Corps' Headquarters was told that the AIF would not go to Germany because it would have to stay for four to five months and that the system of demobilisation by quotas would cause transport problems. The AIF was also worried about unrest among the troops, which the delay would obviously exacerbate. The situation was not clarified and there was some suggestion that the 3rd Division would form part of the Army of Occupation because it had been formed later than the other divisions, and it probably contained more men who would be demobilised late. This idea was rejected in February when Hughes cabled Australia that no Australian troops would be included in the occupation force because the men had 'served too long with little leave'. This was an important decision that Hughes had presumably made a few days earlier. It would greatly effect Monash's planning, but he complained to Hobbs (who was now acting as the Corps' Commander in France) that he had not been informed of it. The evidence, then, seems to indicate that Hughes had originally wanted to include Australians in the occupation force but later changed his mind due to political expediency. Then, much later when returned soldiers complained of the failure of the AIF to go to Germany, Hughes had to find someone to blame other than himself. The retrospective attitude of the Australians is expressed in one soldier's account written well after the war.

> The armies of occupation went to Germany, unaccompanied by any AIF units. We were great troops for winning battles or being slaughtered uselessly and needlessly. But not as an army of occupation, heavens no. All the heads from the Allies were there, the occupied territory would be full of brass, red tabs, shining

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1 Imperial War Cabinet 1918, Minutes of Meetings, 30-48, Meeting, 12 December 1918, Bonor Law Papers, House of Lords Record Office; Draft Minutes, War Cabinet Meeting 43, CO 537/1122, PRO; Cable, 23 December 1918, A 3934, SC 15/8, part 2, AA.

leather and colourful breasts of ribbons. New Zealanders went, Canadians went, Springboks went, but not the Australians.[1]

Luckily this debate affected Monash's planning only slightly, as the latter part of 1918 and early 1919 were spent in returning invalids and convalescents to Australia and not men from the divisions. This part of the work proceeded smoothly during December leading Birdwood (who remained the GOC AIF) to tell Pearce that they were getting off considerable numbers of men and that he hoped to get off 12,000 in the last six weeks of the year, including all of the sick and wounded and men not fully fit.[2]

As well as returning these men, Monash used December to perfect his quota system and to get his office functioning at peak efficiency. To save money, he replaced the female staff with soldiers. They were less efficient, as is shown by his replacing 530 civilian employees by 2,264 soldiers who had to be paid anyway. He soon realised that the work called for some expertise and circularised the AIF to get trained staff (accountants, bankers, clerical workers, etc) to volunteer to work at Demobilisation Headquarters. Because so many men applied, Monash and White agreed that it should be a basic principle of demobilisation that employment would not be rewarded with promotion; this would not be an avenue of advancement for the ambitious. This did not stop the volunteers and they helped to overcome the 'most appalling inefficiency and inertia' that he found in the early days both in England and in France. In doing this, he was helped by the expert staff that he brought with him, Foott, as his deputy, aided by Major General W.A. Coxen (formerly senior artillery commander of the Corps) and Major General J.M.A. Durrant (AA&QMG 2 Division 1917-18).[3]

In conference with these men, Monash determined that the bulk of the AIF would spend most of its time in France. Men would travel to England only for leave, special education or to join NME, and finally to embark for Australia. When the troops finally arrived from France they

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1 Hughes to Australia, 23 December 1918, A 3934 , SC 15/8, part 2 AA; Monash to Hobbs 23 January 1919, Monash Papers NLA 1884, box 130, folder 968, NLA; Bert Bishop, *The Hell, the Humour and the Heartbreak: a Private's View of World War I* (Marrickville: Kangaroo Press, 1991), 262.

2 Birdwood to Pearce, 12 December 1918, Pearce Papers, A4719, vol 12, AA.

3 AWM 25, item 9/3, AWM; Circular 3 January 1919, AWM 25, item 245/65, AWM; Monash to wife, 21 January 1919, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 127, NLA.

would go on leave in England and then would be stationed with their quota in the former training depots.[1]

It was thanks to McCay that Monash had these camps, because in November the British had tried to take back Fovant Camp and the AIF accommodation in Bhurtpore Barracks and Verne Citadel (the old training depots on Salisbury Plain). The British claimed that they would need these to accommodate their own troops once the war was over, but McCay objected strongly. He pointed out that there were thousands of Australian troops still located in England and others were still coming from Australia. These men would need these particular camps for the same reasons that they had been granted to Australia in 1917, that is that the AIF needed the warmer accommodation of the permanent bases if the men were to keep in good health. Eventually, the British were forced to concede and Australia was able to maintain these important staging posts for the returning drafts.[2]

Meanwhile, in France the COs of units had supervised the placing of their men in an order of priority for repatriation and establishing them in their quotas, each of which consisted of 1,000 men with a proportional number of officers (60 per 1,000 men) and NCOs. This group size was chosen because it conformed to a train load and was close to the average capacity of the transport ships that would take them to Australia. It was sometimes necessary to place officers with lower priority with some quotas to maintain the proportion of officers, but the difference was only slight and served to ensure that the men were commanded by familiar figures and discipline was far easier to maintain. These lists were then published so the men could object if they felt that they were being treated unfairly.[3]

When the AIF started sending men home from France, the quotas departed at the rate of one every two days with the divisions sending one in turn. When the men arrived in England a system was followed which was explained carefully to the men so they could see they were being returned as quickly as possible. They spent a minimum of 28 days in the country before their departure to Australia. During this time, they were granted 14 days leave and another 10 days were needed to prepare boat rolls and

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1 Monash to White, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 130, NLA.
2 Correspondence, November 1918, AWM 25, item 245/76, AWM.
3 Minute from GHQ to all Divisional and Corps Headquarters, 19 March 1919, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 131, NLA.

embarkation arrangements. As more shipping was made available Monash was able to cut down the time in England to 21 days, including a leave of 10 days.[1]

There was one minor hitch to the system in early March when the British (ironically, trying to avert trouble after complaints from British troops of overcrowding) tried to restrict the number of men who could be carried on trains to 888 instead of the 1,200 Monash wanted (presumably, the extra 200 were men on leave) . Monash objected to this, and after he had explained his system the British agreed as a compromise to carry a full quota of 1,000 men on the trains, although they placed the responsibility for any overcrowding on the Australians. Monash was quite content with this as he believed that the men would agree to the extra discomfort of 30 men per truck (instead of 24) when they realised that this would get them home that much sooner.[2]

The constant movement of quotas resulted in administrative problems for the commanding officers since they continually had to reorganise their units after each draft departed. Monash emphasised that this was countered by the advantage that each brigade would lose a quota only once per month and reorganisation would thus be minimised. He stressed to the commanders that they should establish their quotas in such a manner as to give every man the fairest treatment possible, with each having the right of appeal to London. Monash continued:

> The whole policy of my department is, while protecting ourselves against imposture, to meet the wishes of every individual man as far as the circumstances permit. This is some small compensation for the sacrifices which we have for the last four years called upon all to make.

In a later letter he acknowledged that this policy would result in some men gaining special privileges of early release but that this was the policy of the government, which was itself cabling for early release in some cases.[3]

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1 Ibid.

2 Monash to Hobbs, 12 March 1919, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 131, NLA.

3 Monash to all to Divisional Commanders, 11 January 1919, AWM 25, item 245/4, AWM; Monash to COs, 7 January 1919, AWM 25, item 245/4, AWM; Monash to Hobbs 22 February 1919, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 131, NLA.

Once the repatriation of the men began, the AIF soon encountered a number of problems. Some were minor cases of ill-discipline and these led to all units being sent warnings against various practices. One of these, which banned men from travelling on the roofs or buffers of the carriages and consuming alcohol on the trains, gives a delightful insight into the exuberance of the troops as they wended their triumphant way home from France. However, other problems were more serious and needed sterner treatment.[1]

The perennial Australian problem of men going absent without leave was the most obvious example of this. In January, Monash wrote of ships leaving with ten percent of their quota missing the sailing of their vessel because the men were absent without leave. He also mentioned that there were over 800 men of the class who had enlisted in 1915 were 'roaming about England' absent without leave. Monash reduced the problem by threatening that men going absent without leave would forfeit their place for repatriation, but he never solved it completely.

Another serious problem which began to occupy the attention of the AIF in France at this time was the theft of AIF equipment for sale to civilians. This appears to have been a new problem for the authorities judging by records of crime from the APM of 1st Anzac Corps in mid 1916 and early 1917. In the list of offences committed over 30 weeks in this period (for example, drunkenness, desertion, disobeying orders, conduct to the prejudice, etc) there is no entry for theft. It is highly unlikely (even if we rely only on anecdotal evidence) that theft was rare. However, it is likely that this was not considered serious when compared to other problems at the time and also that much theft went unnoticed because the 'dump' system made it very easy for men to steal anything they needed. Once the war was over, the dump system was abandoned, thefts then became more obvious and Australia became liable for the cost of supplying its own needs. From the reports of this wave of thefts, it appears that some were carried out by men who had been absent without leave for long periods (some as long as eighteen months to two years, which surely constitutes desertion) and this was difficult to control. The rest, perpetrated by men from formed units, was solved by appealing to the men's pride in their force and by forcing

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1 Rules for Drafts Travelling from France, 25 December 1918, AWM 25, item 99/3, AWM.

commanders to impose tighter security and making them responsible for all property.[1]

The greatest problem of the time, delays caused by a world-wide shortage of shipping, was one which could not be handled internally by the AIF. There were a number of causes, the first being the heavy loss of merchant ships in the war. This led to fewer ships and conflict over their use when nations urgently wanted to renew pre-war overseas trading levels while millions of soldiers were beginning to clamour to be returned to their homes. Although they were aware of the problems, the Australians believed that they were not getting a fair number of ships. In contrast, the British felt that Australia was making excessive demands on shipping because it placed far fewer men on the ships than the British held to be reasonable. In solving the impasse, Hughes' irascible temper proved an asset.

Until he left England to take part in the Versailles Treaty negotiations, Hughes took an active interest in the running of the AIF, as we have seen. That this interest was not always welcome is reflected in a comment of Blamey's:

> As usual the programme which had been laid down under instructions received in your office was cancelled with Mr Hughes' arrival. He was very dissatisfied with the fact that we were unable to read his thoughts, and that he would not spend the time we were informed he would.[2]

At first, Hughes and Monash seem to have worked well together and they were able to resolve any differences. However, after the war the pair displayed a dislike for each other and it is probable that the enmity first developed at this time. Undoubtedly Hughes was influenced by press criticism from his old ally Keith Murdoch, criticism which compared him unfavourably to Monash. Murdoch, in January 1919 changed from his earlier pro-Hughes stance and became very critical of him. This began when he revealed that Hughes was delaying demobilisation because Hughes believed that the men should be returned slowly to prevent economic

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1 Returns from the APM 1st Anzac Corps, April - July 1916, and January to August 1917, AWM 25, item 233/6, Part 1, AWM; AWM 25, item 99/8, AWM; AWM 25, item 29/27, AWM.

2 Blamey to Monash, 22 February 1919, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 133, NLA.

dislocation. Even when Murdoch reported that Hughes had changed his policy, he did it in a way critical of Hughes saying that 'The Government — or Mr Hughes — has surrendered'. He implied that all that was being done was due to Monash, that the latter was doing a very good job and that if politicians interfered, he would go home. This must have been very annoying to the egotistical Hughes, not least because he was now using his influence successfully to arrange for extra shipping for the AIF.[1]

In September Hughes had been successful in gaining shipping to take home the 1914 men. Now he had to fight again over Australia's refusal to place as many men on ships as the British wanted. This issue led to an exchange of acrimonious letters between Hughes and Sir Joseph Maclay. Maclay complained that the Australians were only filling the ships to 80% of the capacity as nominated by the British but Hughes was emphatic that because of the dangers of epidemics and lack of comfort, he would not load the ships beyond this level. This ultimatum was accepted initially but it was to be a further source of debate, for in April the following year the British again complained that the Australians were putting too few men on the ships. This was because the Australian refused to accept the British figures for the capacity of a ship. Instead they would also inspect it and would reduce the British figure if there were problems such as lack of ventilation. They would then load only 80% of the British figure. Naturally this meant that demobilisation was delayed because the Ministry of Shipping could not produce ships to take men home at the promised rate because the promises were based on higher expectations of ship carrying capacities.[2]

Repatriation figures show the extent of the delays. In December and January the AIF had requested a total of 32,000 berths and was given 26,000. In February the gap was exacerbated by a sixteen day strike by ship-repairers (who were converting merchant vessels to carry troops) and the AIF only received 5,000 berths instead of the 16,000 it expected. To reduce the delay, Monash informed the men of the AIF of the problem and called for volunteers to take the place of the ship repairers while stressing that the strike was unofficial and against the wishes of the trade union leadership.

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1 Monash to Birdwood, 5 December 1918, Monash Papers, NLA 1884 , box 130, NLA; Serle, *John Monash*, 429; *Melbourne Herald*, 26 February 1919 and 28 February 1919.

2 Fitzhardinge, *The Little Digger 1914-1952: A Political Biography William Morris Hughes Volume II* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1979), 340-1; correspondence between Hughes and Maclay, 23 December 1918 and 2 January 1919, CP 359, bundle 1/NN, AA; Monash to Hobbs, 16 April 1919, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 134, folder 994. NLA.

This action was typical of Monash's policy of informing the men of all delays, and the reasons for them. Coupled with the men's belief in the system that had been adopted, this was an important reason the AIF was able to avoid any of the serious rioting that now began to affect other forces.[1]

In comparison to this, the delays in demobilisation caused a great deal of unrest in the CEF. In early January, Monash wrote to Hobbs that the Canadian system of demobilisation had broken down, and that the Canadian authorities were having to start again. There had been minor riots and disturbances in the camps in England and a serious disturbance in the Canadian Corps at Nivelles, in France, on 17 December. As Morton states, this was a serious mutiny which was a sign of 'sagging discipline and negligent officers'. This mutiny was followed by a scandal about conditions on the transport *Northland*. An official investigation into the conditions on this vessel recommended that these be improved on the transports provided for the Canadians. To do this, like the Australians, the Canadians reduced the numbers carried on transports but, as for the AIF, this resulted in delays which were exacerbated by the British shipping strikes of February.[2]

These delays caused men to accumulate in the camps, and here their discipline deteriorated and riots soon became more common. The worst of these was a bloody riot at Kinmel Park in which five soldiers were killed on 4 and 5 March, but in all, the CEF identified thirteen serious outbreaks between November 1918 and June 1919. Some of these were inspired by delayed sailings and two were a response to actions by British soldiers and civilians, but most appear to have been caused by attempts to continue to impose a rigid military discipline of the type that Monash had banned in the AIF.[3]

The official explanation for these riots was that they were a reaction to the time being taken to repatriate the men, but Canadians were being sent home at a much faster rate (approximately 25,000 per month) than the Australians, who did not riot. What is significant at this time, is that many

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1 Letter, 1 February 1919, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 131, folder 969, NLA.

2 Monash to Hobbs, 14 January 1919, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 130, folder 967, NLA; Morton, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics*, 182.

3 G.W.L. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1919* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1962), 531-2; 'Disturbances in Canadian Camps and Areas 1918 - 1919', RG 24, vol. 1846, file GAQ II-43-A, NAC.

of the men in the camps were conscripts whose discipline was not as good as that of the volunteers who formed the AIF and the bulk of the CEF. The Canadian Official History also claimed that a major cause of the problem was that the CEF gave no real explanation to the troops about reasons for the delays. This is, of course, a great contrast to the situation in the AIF which at all times gave the men a great deal of accurate information about delays, their cause, and what was being done to overcome them. That this information was given to a volunteer force, anxious to preserve its reputation is probably the main reason why the AIF was the only major force in Britain not to have anti-demobilisation riots at this time.[1]

The British Army was also struck by a wave of riots and demonstrations in early January 1919 and, in contrast to those in the CEF which received a great deal of unfavourable publicity, information about these was largely suppressed. Most Britons would not have been aware that between 6 January and 25 July 1919, the British Army experienced 28 serious demonstrations, most of which developed into riots, some of which resulted in severe casualties, such as one in which 58 police officers and firemen were injured. There was one more serious mutiny, this time in France. On 30 and 31 January 1918, 5,000 men mutinied at Calais. To end this demonstration, Haig had to employ two 'loyal divisions complete with machine guns'. He arrested three ringleaders and was so incensed that Churchill had great difficulty in convincing him that they should not be executed for mutiny.[2]

These protests were against inequities in the British system and were so serious that they caused Winston Churchill to devise a scheme which was more obviously fairer. The scheme still retained men both for an army of occupation, to send some men to Russia to fight the Bolsheviks and to meet the demands of an increasingly turbulent empire in which troubles were developing in India, Ireland, Egypt, Syria and Afghanistan. After much discussion, he announced his new scheme on 29 January and this was much fairer than its predecessor. Men who had enlisted before 1916 were to be discharged immediately and, although conscription was retained for a time,

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1 'Disturbances in Canadian Camps and Areas 1918 - 1919', RG 24, vol. 1846, file GAQ II-43-A, NAC.

2 Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: Volume IV, 1916-1922* (London: Heinemann, 1975), 192-3; 'Suppression of Publicity Relating to Mutinies etc. at Imperial Camps', MG 27 II, D9, vol 138, file II(c), NAC.

men would be demobilised on the basis of age, length of service and combat experience (especially if they had been wounded). This resulted in a much more rapid demobilisation although it did not eliminate soldiers demonstrating against their being posted overseas or being demobilised too slowly.[1]

The AIF was not struck by serious rioting but there were many breaches of discipline. The most serious was in the 3rd Division Artillery which 'went on strike' in early January. The men's main complaint was against their having to perform military duties which they felt were unnecessary (again something about which Monash had warned senior officers). When their complaints did not work, they 'struck'. Hobbs told Monash that the problem was due to 'want of tact and judgement in the handling of men', and both the acting CRA (who was British) and one of his majors were sacked. Hobbs also indicated that the 'strike' was not strongly supported by the men, later stating that the ringleaders of this trouble were now not popular and had been badly treated by the men.

This was the closest the AIF came to the serious disciplinary problems that plagued virtually all other forces, but there were some minor problems in the AIF. Usually these came about because junior officers were no longer willing to maintain their previous standards of discipline. After complaints about this, Monash felt impelled to send out circulars emphasising the role that had to be played by all officers in maintaining the standards and reputation of the AIF.[2]

There were other problems that could have led to unrest in the force. The greatest was dissatisfaction with the education scheme. It was originally hoped that this scheme would be of great benefit to the men and to Australia, but these hopes soon proved to be too optimistic. There were not the positions available in British factories and many men became disillusioned with the scheme due to initial delays and also because of the fear that their demobilisation would be delayed if they took part in NME. As a result, only a small number of men actually benefited from it. Monash and Hughes had already agreed that they would restrict the numbers

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1 Gilbert, *Churchill*, 181-196; Graubard, 'Military Demobilisation', 302-4.

2 Hobbs to Monash, 7 & 12 January 1919, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 133, folder 985, NLA; eg from McCay 11 February 1919, AWM 25, item 245/65. AWM; General Instruction Number 4, 14 February 1919, AWM 25, item 245/4, AWM.

involved in NME to 20,000 but only 12,750 men had completed any form of technical, industrial, agricultural or university training in the UK by December 1919, and the scheme failed to live up even to the most conservative hopes.[1]

The initial delays in the scheme arose out of the need to get the administration organised in England, and still further by military staffs in France, which were very slow to process the men's requests. Out of frustration, some men began to take charge of their own affairs and tried to arrange their own NME when they were in Great Britain on leave. Some succeeded, went to Britain on leave and then stayed there because they had arranged their own employment. This, in turn, led to other men complaining. These complaints were viewed seriously by the headquarters staff, since one of the causes of a British riot at Folkestone in January was the ability of some men to arrange an early release in Britain, when this was denied to men in France, and the Australian Repatriation and Demobilisation Department quickly issued a rule that men on leave could not be transferred to NME or the AIF administration in the UK, or allowed early demobilisation on special grounds, unless they first returned to their unit in France. This seems to have averted any trouble and during January and February, although demobilisation proceeded slowly, most complaints from the men were minor ones, while the AIF laid the foundation for an increase in the rate of return of the troops.

Monash did not believe that the British were as anxious as the Australians to speed up the pace of repatriation. He complained that the number of ships the Australians and the New Zealanders were allocated was unfair when compared to those given to the CEF and AEF. The various forces were being allotted ships in proportion to the size of their force but, as Monash pointed out, the voyage to Australia took sixteen weeks compared to only four weeks to Canada. Because of this, he believed that Australia should get at least three times as many ships to be treated equally. That the treatment was not equal is shown by the numbers of men repatriated by 1 April. By that date, the CEF had returned over twice as many men and dependants (110,384 soldiers plus 7,279 dependants) as the AIF (49,116 soldiers and 1,300 dependants). The disparity between the AIF and the AEF

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1 Repatriation and Demobilisation Department Statistic Returns, A2487/1, item 20/992, AA.

was even more marked; by about 22 March the latter had repatriated 480,000 men. To overcome the difference, Monash needed more ships and George Pearce's arrival in London on 19 March was to prove important in this.[1]

It was fortunate that a strong basis had been laid by the time Pearce arrived because he was 'bowled over' for two weeks by the influenza which was raging at the time. After he recovered, Monash was very glad of his help in fighting to gain additional shipping from the British claiming that Pearce was able to 'smooth away very many difficulties' and could go over the head of the senior civil servants to 'browbeat ministers' if need be. 'Not only was he able, by the weight of his authority, to obtain prompt attention to the demands made upon Imperial resources in the direction of maintaining our embarkation programmes at a full scale, but he could settle without delay a great mass of administrative and financial questions which were a nature to require the exercise of ministerial responsibility'.[2]

This was especially important because, soon after his arrival, he found that the British had withdrawn a number of the promised transports so that they could be used to reopen trade with Argentina. This action would have been doubly unpopular in Australia because Australia was already worried about threats to its trade, and on 7 March Hughes had complained to the British about the amount of trade with Britain that Australia had lost to Canada, the USA and Argentina during the war. With these two issues in mind Pearce had a meeting with 'the minister controlling shipping Sir William Macleay' (sic) in which he lost his temper but eventually won back the threatened ships, and in so doing proved the benefit of having such a high official in London who could afford to lose his temper with a high British civil servant. His case was undoubtedly strengthened by the desire of Lloyd George and his Cabinet to speed up repatriation of their allies because they were becoming worried about the behaviour of the dominion soldiers waiting for repatriation (the CEF was

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1 Monash to Hughes, 26 February 1919, CP 359, bundle 1/NN, AA; CP 359, bundle 1/NN, AA; Lloyd George to Sir Joseph Maclay, 22 March 1919, Lloyd George Papers, f 35/3/8, House of Lords Record Office.

2 Pearce to Millen, 30 April 1919, A4719/1, bundle 7, item 1-50, AA; Monash to Watt, 16 May 1919, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 132, folder 976, NLA; Monash to wife, 10 May 1919, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 127, NLA; Monash quoted in *Official History Vol XI*, 826.

the formation most at fault here, but Lloyd George does not appear to have made the distinction).[1]

It was at this time that members of the CEF staged a serious riot at Kinmel Camp and, one day after Hughes complained to the British, Kemp wrote to Borden to tell him that because the British had attributed the Kinmel Park disturbance to delays in shipping they had just agreed to Canadian pleas to speed up repatriation and had given them the *Olympic*, a large liner which could carry over 5,300 men. Shortly after this, Lloyd George wrote to Maclay and clearly detailed his desire to return the Australians more quickly, both because of their service ('They have had to come over 12,000 miles, they have been fighting in Europe from the beginning of the war, they have had no home leave, and they have endured some of the hardest fighting and heaviest casualties of the war') and because he was 'afraid we may have serious trouble from them'.[2]

From March, the process of demobilisation went fairly smoothly. Despite minor problems of indiscipline, difficulties with ill-health (the army was hit by the severe influenza epidemic of this time) and a few complaints from some troops about their status for repatriation, the men were generally content that the system was working for them and took part in NME or in the education system as it existed in their unit. Within the units, the education scheme consisted mainly of lectures on a variety of topics that were designed to stop the men from getting bored (as one transport officer put it 'if I don't break the monotony for him [the soldier] he will break it for me'). Some of these lectures were well attended, but most interested only a few of the men. Judging by a survey of some battalion histories, far more popular means of keeping the men occupied were such things as 'the many dances and concerts' held by the 6th Battalion, bus tours of towns in Belgium and France and sport, which was a daily activity. The soldiers also amused themselves, and the 30th Battalion was undoubtedly not the only one in which 'two-up' was assiduously played by the soldiers

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1 Sir George Pearce, *Carpenter to Cabinet* (Melbourne: Hutchinson & Co., 1951), 150; Notes in file, 'Report on Dominion Forces', WO 32/5243, PRO.

2 Kemp to Borden, 4 & 8 March 1919, Borden Papers, reel C4371, MG 26, H1(a), vol 163, NAC; Report, MG 27, II D9, vol 188, NAC; Lloyd George to Sir Joseph Maclay, 22 March 1919, Lloyd George Papers, f 35/3/8, House of Lords Record Office.

and in which catching fish with the aid of explosives was a popular past-time.[1]

Those who benefited from the education scheme the most were those who received some form of university education, were trained in a trade or who were able to get on the tour to Denmark or the United States of America. However, out of the total numbers in the AIF, these were a small and privileged group. Only 782 men were able to attend a university, and only 4,688 underwent some form of industrial training (and these men had to have had trade qualifications from before the war). Those who studied agriculture in Denmark (only twenty-five men, most of whom were graduates of Australian agricultural colleges or men who had been employed in responsible positions in the agricultural industry before the war) and in America were especially fortunate.[2]

Hughes had suggested in 1918 that he wanted to send men both to Denmark and America to study, but it appears that the latter trip could also have been inspired by an application from Ivan Murdoch (brother of the correspondent) to travel to the USA to study irrigation. This was referred to Pearce who replied that he could not authorise such a trip for an individual at government expense, but that he would arrange for a party to be sent if enough men were interested. Enough men were, and Murdoch was selected in the party of one hundred who were sent to California to study both practical and theoretical agriculture. It is possible that the trip would have been undertaken even if Murdoch had not written to Monash, but it does appear that it was the influence of the correspondent that led to its being organised.[3]

Within France other aspects of the education scheme caused problems. As part of the scheme, in early December Hobbs had established both divisional schools and a Corps school. The former were intended to re-educate men in their old skills (both trades and clerical skills), while the

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1 OC transport *Morvada* to Monash, 31 January 1919, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 136. NLA; Ronald J. Austin, *As Rough as Bags: The History of the 6th Battalion, 1st AIF 1914-1919* (McCrae: R.J. & S.P. Austin, 1992), 290; Lieut-Colonel H. Sloan, *The Purple and Gold: A History of the 30th Battalion* (Sydney: 1938), 220, 226-7, 230; John Edwards, *Never a Backward Step: A History of the First 33rd Battalion, AIF* (Grafton: Bettong Books, 1996), 114.

2 A2487/1, item 19/4203, AA; Second Monthly Report Repatriation Officer Repatriation and Demobilisation Department UK,11 June 1919, A2487, item 19/7763, AA.

3 Monash to Murdoch, 5 April 1919, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 132, NLA.

Corps school aimed to teach men new trades. Both soon ran into problems. These ranged from a constant shortage of instructors (men were afraid that they would lose their place in their quota if they volunteered to fill this role) and an acute shortage of text-books for the various courses. These were eventually obtained from England after some weeks' delay, but Hobbs had greater difficulties in getting tools for a Corps workshop established in Jeumont on the French-Belgium border. This was designed to employ and instruct about 2,000 men in a variety of new trades. However, the school had trouble in getting machinery. Some was 'scrounged' from the area but the French soon demanded this back. Eventually, German tools were found and, with the aid of the labour provided by 500 POWs, the school commenced operations on 1 January. It continued operations until May when the members were repatriated home.[1]

The education scheme caused Monash problems in other ways. He felt that it was not run 'on a businesslike footing' by Bishop Long, who was now the Director of Education in the AIF. Monash complained that the Education Branch was slow to understand that there were financial restraints on it and to adapt its methods to the requirements approved by the Prime Minister. He also felt that it had been slow in processing applications, and seems to have been happy when Long was replaced by Brigadier General Sir W.R. McNicoll in March, because then the 'whole Branch will be thoroughly reorganised, with a view to putting it on a more businesslike footing.' Generally, his hopes were realised and the scheme fulfilled a useful purpose until the last of the troops were repatriated.[2]

From March, the process of repatriating the troops to Australia was continued fairly smoothly despite some arguments between the British and Monash and a 'tough and bitter battle' for ships. Monash complained that Maclay was using all methods to make it appear that he was willing to meet Australia's requirements when in fact he was not doing so, and Monash and Hughes argued over this when Maclay offered to make some converted merchant-cruisers available as transports. Hughes accepted these and was angry when Monash rejected them. Monash was able to show that the British had not been able to produce the full number of ships that had been

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1 Hobbs to Monash, 7 December 1918, 27 December 1918, 7 January 1919 and 15 January 1919, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 133, NLA; Bean, *Official History Vol VI*, 1068.

2 Monash to Sir Joseph Cook, 13 March 1919, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 131, folder 972, NLA

promised, and that this was not a genuine offer. He indicated to Pearce that he always had a reserve of 20,000 men ready to leave and was not delaying repatriation as Hughes claimed. Despite this he was ordered to accept the cruisers. It does appear, however, that Monash was correct in his opinion of the offer because the merchant-cruisers do not appear to have been used. At the same time the British continued to urge unsuccessfully that the Australians to embark more troops on the transports. Despite these problems, the movement of the troops from Europe in increasing numbers continued smoothly.[1]

The return of the 19,200 men of the AIF from Egypt in November 1918 had been delayed because the men were hastily impressed to help suppress the nationalist rioting that had broken out in the country on 15 March. There was no move to return them to Australia until after 7 May when Pearce complained to Churchill that there was no agreement for the men to police Egypt. He explained that because over 50% of the men had contracted malaria in the Jordan Valley, the doctors wanted them out of Egypt before the heat of June. This appeal worked and limited repatriation recommenced immediately, being replaced by unrestricted demobilisation in June. From this date, repatriation was rapid and the last Australian troops left Egypt in September.[2]

By September, demobilisation was winding down in England as well. From the last months from June, until he returned home on 15 November, Monash had only to supervise the embarkation of the quotas and keep a close contact with the transport ships on their trip home. He had asked all commanders of quotas to report to him personally, and through their letters he was able to ensure that he knew what problems they faced and how he could help ease them. In general, he found that conduct on the ships was good although there were cases of indiscipline when the men went ashore from the first ships, especially in Egypt and Colombo where men went absent without leave and got drunk on shore. Later it was found that if the men were given leave in all of the ports, they behaved well. On the ships they grumbled a little if conditions were not as they expected, they gambled,

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1 Monash to Murdoch, 15 April 1919, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 132, NLA; Monash to Pearce, 31 March 1919, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 131, NLA; General Wisdom to Deputy Director General, 4 June 1919, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 135, folder 999, NLA.

2 Pearce to Churchill, 7 May 1919, Monash Papers NLA 1884, box 134, NLA; History of Demobilisation of AIF from Egypt, Pearce Papers, A4719/1, item 1-50, bundle 7, AA.

listened to the ship's band, read and, sometimes, expressed interest in the lessons that were presented. They were now slipping into peace-time life, and neither the men nor the officers wanted military training. They were willing to do fatigues and to work to keep their deck clean, however, and so most ships returned home with no problems of any great moment.

Finally then, the AIF returned to Australia. The performance of the department of Repatriation and Demobilisation had been excellent. There had been problems, caused both internally and externally, but these had been overcome. The scheme adopted had worked well and this was the main reason that the AIF was not troubled by the serious rioting that was a feature of other armies at the time. This rioting had frightened both the British and the Canadians into changing their schemes to ones which closely resembled that of the AIF, and had led the British to find ships at a much faster rate than they had planned at first. This latter was a help to the Australians but it seems almost certain that the discipline of the force would have withstood an even slower return, as long as the men were kept informed of what was happening. In the end, it was the ability of Monash to win the trust of his troops that proved crucial to the success of his scheme. Monash had proven once again his ability to formulate a plan and to make it work. Thus what could have been the most difficult time for the administration of the AIF turned out to be one of its greatest successes.

As the Official History recorded it:

> The last transport to leave England was the *Port Napier* which left for Australia on 23 December 1919. In the words of the Official History, 'thus bringing to a conclusion a piece of brilliantly organised work which, for perfection of planning and smoothness of working was considered by Sir John Monash to be the best example of 'staff work' with which he was associated in the war.

It was, in his opinion, 'his best performance'.[1]

The reasons for the success are best summarised by Rosenthal. He stated that he expected his appointment as commandant of the Base Depots to be his hardest in the AIF. That this turned out to be wrong he ascribed to the following factors:

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[1] Scott, *Official History Vol. XI*, 827.

(a) A feeling that the Commonwealth Government and the Demobilisation Department was treating the troops generously and sympathetically.

(b) A feeling that myself, personally, and all the staffs, both at Headquarters and the various groups, were determined to do anything possible for the comfort, improvement and entertainment of the men during the period of waiting.

(c) The re-grouping of the camps into Divisional; Groups each commanded by a tried and respected Brigadier from the respective Divisions — consequently, men were always associated only with troops in their own Division and esprit de corps was accordingly high. Previously as each quota arrived from France it was sent to whatever area had a camp vacant, irrespective of the composition with the personnel of the camp concerned.

(d) Pride in their fighting record which they did not want to see sullied by unseemly conduct in England.

All of these features were either devised by Monash or encouraged by him, and he was perfectly justified in the pride with which he viewed his achievement. Thus the last actions of those charged with the administration of the AIF were a resounding success and conclusive proof of the manner in which their level of performance had improved throughout the war, and there being no greater evidence of this improvement than Monash's demobilisation scheme.[1]

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1 *Report on the Base Depots*, 18 September 1919, Monash Papers, NLA 1884, box 135, NLA.

Conclusion

Because it treats an area so long neglected, this thesis might be criticised for focussing on an area of relatively little importance. Nothing can be further from the truth, best illustrated by the words of Major General J.M. Durrant in 1933:

> The psychological effect of good administration is enormous. The effect of bad administration is equally as great, but the results are not so fortunate. Bad administration is quickly noticed by our own troops, and causes lack of confidence and low morale, so that the troops are defeated before the battle commences.

He went on to emphasise that 'military administration has become a critical element of success in war', and noted that it 'is not a subject which is divorced from the problems of strategy and tactics. Quite the contrary, administration is the servant of strategy and tactics.' They are, in short, an 'interdependent trinity'.[1]

This thesis has shown that the administration of the AIF and, indeed, the CEF, deserves more space than has been devoted to it. From very troubled beginnings, the AIF quickly evolved an efficient system of administration. It developed sound administrative practices that enabled it to fit into the much larger British system of battle-front administration, while at the same time coping with problems which were outside that system. After its initial shaky beginnings during the Gallipoli campaign, the administrative section of the AIF was able to cope with problems efficiently, and where failures did occur on the battlefield they had little or nothing to do with poor administration.

Efficient administration is a factor in military success, but it cannot guarantee it. What we see in the First World War is that an efficient system of administration was developed which eliminated some of the hardships and tragedy of war but which was not able to eliminate them all. Men did not starve to death in France, the wounded were usually removed from the battlefield relatively quickly and then treated effectively, and huge amounts of ammunition and other supplies were delivered to the front efficiently on virtually every occasion. Where shortages did occur, they were usually local

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[1] Major General J.M. Durrant, 'Army Administration for War', a lecture presented in November 1933, Private Papers of J.M. Durrant, PR88/009, folder 6, AWM.

and of short duration or the fault of an incapacity to manufacture the quantities needed rather than a failure to deliver them to where they were needed. The AIF shared in this process by being supplied by the British administration, and benefited greatly from it.

When small nations fight as the allies of larger nations, they naturally have to surrender much of their autonomy if the combined armies are to fight efficiently. This will create tensions and can lead to a less efficient battlefield performance. One only has to look at the abrasive relations between the British and Americans in 1942-4 and between the Germans and the Italians in 1941-3 to see this. In the willingness of Australia and Canada to subsume much of their autonomy into the British administrative structure, these dominions contributed enormously to overall allied success. In doing so, they faced the necessity of surrendering much individual choice to the needs of unified strategies and tactics. They also had to do this for other reasons: for the efficient supply (especially), for accommodation, for leave, for training programs and all transport. The early Canadian refusal to standardise much of its armament and equipment with that of the rest of the BEF, with the resultant loss of efficiency and (in the case of the Ross rifle) of troop morale, shows, by contrast, the importance of this acceptance to the overall performance of the AIF.

At the same time, both the AIF and the CEF experienced a growing need to emphasise their own separate national identity within the larger organisation. In doing so each still displayed features unique to their own organisation, which emphasised this sense of national identity. Often the AIF and the CEF chose similar practices to solve similar problems, which suggests the worth of a comparative study. The most obvious example of this was the decision, quickly arrived at, to select officers almost exclusively from the ranks in both the AIF and the CEF. This was a decision which the British were never committed to, and when the practice became more common in their regiments, it occurred late in the war when casualties made it a necessity. Yet, arguably, this was fundamental to the battlefield successes of the two dominion forces. The other most obvious difference between British practices and those of the AIF was the manner in which the latter was much less formal in its disciplinary practices, especially in relations between officers and men. While this was not an administrative decision, it did make for more efficient administration because it led to a mutual trust in the abilities of officers and men.

This study has also shown that, perhaps contrary to generally accepted views, the British were very tolerant of the dominions' 'idiosyncrasies' and were willing to make great concessions to them in all ways, probably to ensure that they would continue to supply the troops which were earning a well deserved reputation for quality on the battlefield. The most obvious example of this was capitation. The records seem to indicate that the British virtually always conceded when their allies argued strongly for a lower level of payment. They were prepared to charge Australia higher rates than Canada, it seems largely because the Australians did not fight as hard for concessions as did the Canadians, but they were both able to negotiate charges that appear to be substantially below the actual cost of maintaining their forces. Similarly, the British were remarkably tolerant of Australia's refusal to institute the death penalty in the AIF. Despite this being frequent practice in the rest of the BEF, and despite the strongly worded pleas from British and Australian generals, the British government agreed that members of the AIF should not be subject to the Army Act. The Australian government was quite emphatic that it wanted to keep this concession, largely because of the impact which the imposition of the death penalty on members of the AIF would have had on recruiting, and the British government agreed because it, too, wanted nothing to interfere with Australian recruiting. Other examples of this tolerance conflicting with the efficient running of the BEF include the acceptance of the Canadians' using non-standard equipment for the early part of the war, and W.M. Hughes' insistence that the Australians who had enlisted in 1914 should be given home leave.

The crucial question in all this is how it contributed to the overall battlefield performance of the AIF. The final successes of the war were affected by 'administrative excellence brought about by four years of war'. This excellence was seen at all levels in the BEF but nowhere better than in the AIF and the CEF.[1]

The most obvious factor in this administrative success was the ability of the BEF to get large amounts of ammunition and other supplies where they were needed and in providing efficiently for the well-being of both fit

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[1] Ian M. Brown, 'The British Expeditionary Force and the Difficult Transition to "Peace", 1918-1919', Journal of Strategic Studies, 19:4, December 1996, 93.

and unfit troops. But in the case of the AIF as a national army, other sections of the administration were equally important. By 1918 the troops were able to get adequate leave entitlements, especially when compared to the British. When they took this leave, all efforts were made to ensure that they had every chance to enjoy it with a reduced chance of catching VD, or with a far greater chance of cure if they did catch it. In France their mail was delivered promptly and efficiently and they were well fed and warmly clothed with the Australian-style clothing they wanted. All of this contributed to a high morale which in turn contributed, to some extent, to battlefield performance. More obviously linked to this performance was the development of an efficient system of appointment of officers (of all ranks), and of training the troops.

Because the Australian units were led by men who had virtually all been appointed from the ranks, and usually from within the battalion by 1918, the AIF was guaranteed leadership which was both experienced and of proven capacity. At a higher level, staff officers were much better trained and they served senior officers who were more acceptable to the ordinary soldiers because they were Australian, which had become an important point by 1918. At the same time, the soldiers were trained thoroughly and in a manner which gave them much recreation (especially sporting contests) and little unnecessary discipline in the form of parades and demands for drill and 'spit and polish'. These factors all contributed to battlefield success by producing a force which had relatively high morale and excellent training and lower level leadership.

To return to one of the early points of this thesis, it is clear that C.E.W. Bean, for all his virtues, missed a important reason for the success of the AIF through his failure to cover administration. He produced a romanticised and poetic view of the Australian soldier, but missed the fact that the success of the AIF owed at least as much to hard and conscientious work by administrators as it did to any national virtues of the Australian soldier. This failure does no real service to either the administrators or the soldiers they served, and so prevents his work from giving a complete picture of the AIF. The administration of the AIF may have started in a shaky manner, but it developed levels of efficiency which led directly to the AIF's greatest successes in the latter part of the war.

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