29TH JANUARY, 1942.

WAR CABINET

THE COMMITTEE ON SKILLED MEN IN THE SERVICES

(MEMORANDUM BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR)

The Minister of Labour and National Service has circulated to the War Cabinet the Second Report (Part I) of Sir William Beveridge's Committee on Skilled Men in the Services and asks for a decision on the question of its publication. The First (or Interim) Report of the Committee was rendered in August and has already been published (Cmd. 6307). In brief, so far as the Army and the Royal Air Force were concerned, that Report said:

(a) "The work of repair, maintenance, etc. of machines of war is now being performed both in the Army and in the Air Force with a notable economy of skilled men, secured by a high degree of dilution and extensive and well-designed arrangements for training."

(b) "Vigorous efforts are being made by these Services to discover men already in the Forces not already engaged on such work whose qualifications make it likely they could undertake it with success or could be trained to do so."

(c) "In view of the military programmes, a large increase of men engaged on such work is inevitable, exceeding the numbers who can be obtained within the Services by training or transfer."

It may be asked why the favourable verdict quoted above from the First Report was reversed in most respects by the Second Report received towards the end of October. The ostensible reason was that in the meantime the Beveridge Committee had interviewed 139 men in the Army, from among names furnished by employers and trade unions, who were alleged to be skilled men whom the Army was either misusing or not using at all as such. On this I would offer two comments. In the first place, 139 cases do not afford a very broad foundation on which to base a general condemnation of the use of skilled men by the Army and an argument that all the skill the Army requires can be found (with a minor exception) from within its own resources already in the Service. In the second place, the Beveridge Committee interviewed these 139 men without knowing their "trade history" since joining the Army or the operational role of their units; the War Office have gone through the same 139 cases in the light of the complete knowledge in their possession, and after trade-testing doubtful cases, have reduced by 50% the proportion of "misfits" stated by the Committee to exist among the 139 cases examined by them.

I have thought it well to circulate to my colleagues a detailed commentary on the strictures upon the Army's use of its skilled men contained in the Second Report of the Beveridge Committee. It is a long document,
and I therefore preface it with a short statement of the main points, cross-referenced to the full memorandum. If the War Cabinet decide that the Second Report of the Beveridge Committee should be published I would invite them to approve publication also of both the memoranda attached to this paper; the shorter one will cover most of the ground for the purposes of the Press; the longer memorandum contains a reasoned statement of what is, I submit, a strong case for the Army to recruit the ranks of its skilled personnel from industry to a much greater extent than the Beveridge Committee were willing to concede.

The War Office,
29th January, 1942.

D.M.
SKILLED TRADERS IN THE ARMY.

(This Summary should be read in conjunction with the more detailed Memorandum annexed, to which it is cross-referenced).

The Second Report of the Beveridge Committee expresses the view that in the Army:-

(a) Skilled manpower is not yet being used with due economy and effect and substantial changes of organisation and machinery are necessary.

(b) Subject to minor improvements, Army arrangements for training skilled men are adequate, but as they have largely had to be improvised they need closer integration with Army organisations as a whole, together with a better selection of trainees.

(c) There is a clear possibility that the Army's requirements in tradesmen can be met from within the Army itself, apart from a certain number of highly skilled men needed as armament artisans.

During the last eight months a detailed scrutiny of the whole manpower resources of the Army has been undertaken by the War Office with the purpose of relating the forces available to the operational requirements of the theatres of war and at the same time of economising manpower and of substituting women for men, where possible.

Recognising the room for improvement in the posting arrangements of men with skilled qualifications, the War Office, before the Beveridge Committee was set up, had already experimented with a trial system of intake for General Service with a view to testing possibilities and measuring difficulties. Thus, a training centre has been set up in Scotland, the intake into which will be enlisted for General Service, but where recruits will be retained for the period of their basic training, during which they will undergo selection tests with a view to finding out the arm, corps and employment in the Army for which they are most suited. If it is found practicable, the War Office will introduce enlistment for the Army instead of for corps. Meanwhile improved methods of selection and posting, such as the experiment in Scotland, are being applied to Army intakes of men, and a lieutenant-colonel with the necessary technical knowledge has been appointed to the staff of each Command to advise on and to supervise the subject of trade testing and technical training in the Army. In addition, the staff for inspecting and supervising the various trade training establishments is being strengthened.

The question as to whether all mechanical maintenance in the Army should be concentrated in one corps is being considered by a Committee of three senior members of the War Office staff who are of high standing and long experience in the business world. Their report will be considered in the light of practical considerations.

Two further measures have been introduced to reduce the number of "misfits" in the Army and to economise skilled manpower. In the first place, Tradesmen's Interview Boards have been set up in each Command to interview all skilled men, actual or potential, and to secure that they are appropriately graded and employed in the Army, or where necessary given further skilled training. In particular, these/
those Boards will look into the cases of men whose names are being supplied to the War Office by employers and trade unions, through the Beveridge Committee. Secondly, a strong Committee has been set up with the purpose of reviewing Army establishments: the numbers of skilled men employed will be reduced to a minimum, semi-skilled men will be substituted for skilled where possible, and the resources of highly-skilled men will be pooled among corps and units so far as is practicable. In both these activities, representatives of the Ministry of Labour will be associated.

Such are some of the steps the War Office is taking as a result of its recognition of the value of the constructive criticism contained in the Second Report of the Beveridge Committee.

In considering the Report's criticisms, however, it should be remembered that since the Army is likely to be more fully engaged in overseas operations in the near future, the Report (framed last summer) is already "dated." It was addressed mainly to conditions in which Army units and establishments operated at home. Furthermore, the Committee, composed as it is, has naturally applied to the questions under review the standards of civil industry; whereas the Army is first and foremost a fighting machine and must be organised to the best advantage as such. Operational requirements impose limitations on the most economical use of skilled manpower in the Army judging by the standards of industrial organisation. The Army problem of organising maintenance is far more difficult than that of the Navy and R.A.F. who normally operate from organised bases. "Echeloned" service is imposed on the Army by the conditions of land warfare - thus skilled tradesmen must be distributed in small units to most forward fighting formations from the rear maintenance workshops. This echeloned chain of repair and maintenance inevitably use up more tradesmen than concentrated Base Workshop organisations. The campaign in Libya is a striking proof of this.

A main fault found by the Committee is that the Army allows too many skilled men to stand by unused at any one time. Though it is admitted that there may be room for slight improvement (which will be made), the Report of the Committee itself answers its own objection in paragraph 31: "War in certain phases involves standing by to act rather than acting; in war, engineers like others must be kept waiting either not fully occupied or occupied otherwise than as engineers, but ready to use their skill in emergencies at a moment's notice. We certainly do not reject a claim to hold power in reserve for emergencies."

The Beveridge Committee examined 139 serving soldiers and placed 36 of these men in Category VI(a) as men who though in Service trades suited to their civilian skill, had not been working at those trades to any substantial extent; and 36 in Category VI(b) as men not mustered in a Service trade or wrongly mustered. The Committee did not have before them these men's "trade histories" since joining the Army and they did not relate their employment at the time of the interviews to the operational background of their units. The War Office, re-examining each individual case in the light of their knowledge on these points, reduced the numbers of men to 16 in Category VI(a) and 20 in VI(b), a reduction of about 50%. On the other hand, in Category I(a), composed of men making full use of their civilian skill in a Service trade, the War Office included, as a result of fuller information, 49 men as against 13 so allocated by the Committee. It does not seem that an investigation of 139 cases (in which, in fact, lack of information was responsible for a 50% inaccurate assessment of "misfits") is a sufficient body of evidence on which to base the adverse judgment of the Army's use of its skilled personnel given by the Committee.

In effect, the argument that the Army has had two years in which to segregate its skilled men is invalid, since until the Russian campaign has momentarily reduced the threat of invasion, the Army
has never been more than a dangerously slender fighting force, every member of which has to be a trained fighting soldier if invasion is to be repelled. Even to-day, when a potential tradesman is taken from the ranks of fighting units to be trained as such, he must be replaced by a fighting soldier who requires between 6 and 8 months' training before he is fitted for his place in a fighting unit. The fighting soldier himself, in these days of complicated weapons, is no mere intelligent unskilled man, but must be a highly trained "tradesman" in the use of his weapons. Nevertheless over 80,000 men, before the Beveridge Committee was set up, had been allocated to employment appropriate to their skill, while since the outbreak of war 58,000 highly skilled personnel, officers and men, had been released from the Army for work of national importance.
The Committee under Sir William Beveridge, set up by the Minister of Labour and National Service in June last, were asked "to advise in the light of the operational and maintenance requirements of the three Services" whether:

(a) the skilled manpower in the Services was being used economically and effectively;

(b) whether the Services' arrangements for training skilled men were adequate; and

(c) whether the Services' demands for skilled tradesmen for the period ending 31st March, 1942, should be modified.

So far as the Army is concerned, the Committee answered these three questions as follows:

(a) skilled manpower is not yet being used with due economy and effect, and substantial changes of organisation and machinery are necessary;

(b) subject to minor improvements Army arrangements for training skilled men are adequate, but as they have largely had to be improvised they need closer integration with Army organisation as a whole, together with a better selection of trainees;

(c) there is a clear possibility that the Army's requirements in tradesmen can be met from within the Army itself, apart from a certain number of highly skilled men needed as armament artificers.

2. The Beveridge Committee have carried out a valuable survey of skilled manpower in the Army. Composed of members with wide experience of industry, and containing representatives of both the employers and the Trade Unions' interest, they have perhaps naturally applied to the questions under their review the standards of civil industry. But the Army cannot be fitted entirely into the mould of civil industry; it is first and foremost a fighting machine and must be organised to the best advantage as such. Operational requirements impose in many ways restrictions and limitations on the most economical use of skilled manpower in the Army, judged by the standards of a well conducted industrial establishment; and in the last resort the success or failure of the Army's organisation of its resources in skilled manpower must turn on the Army's efficiency as a fighting machine.

The Committee themselves (Para. 55 of their Second Report) put the matter in a nutshell when they say:

"The first priority in war is, for whatever is needed to keep the machines of war in action. Breakdown of a machine of war in action means more than the loss of that particular machine; it means as a rule the loss
...
of the fighting men; it may mean the loss of a battle .... It is not sufficient to produce the machines of war; they must be maintained continuously in action under all conditions."

The conditions of land warfare do not allow of the organisation of the maintenance of Army vehicles, equipment, etc., on the basis of elaborate central workshops: armoured fighting vehicles, guns, etc. have to be repaired under conditions of actual warfare as near as possible to the front; all warlike stores must be kept effective for action as long as possible, and only when major repair or overhaul is required can the Army afford to bring the equipment back to a central base workshop for treatment. In this respect the Army problem is different from and far more difficult than that of the Navy and the R.A.F., who normally operate from elaborately organised bases; "echeloned service" is imposed on the Army by these conditions of land warfare, i.e. skilled tradesmen must be distributed in small units right up to the most forward fighting formations, as well as with the rearward maintenance workshops. This echeloned chain of repair and maintenance inevitably uses up more tradesmen than a concentrated base workshop organisation; the present campaign in Libya, even more than its forerunner a year ago, has pointed the moral of this for the Army in no uncertain terms, and it is not going too far to say that the success achieved by General Auchinleck's forces has been very largely due to the rapid repair and replacement in the fighting line of armoured fighting vehicles temporarily knocked out in battle. This is one of the outstanding lessons we have learned from our enemies; we may hope that we have improved upon it in the process. It has been necessary to set out this operational background to the Army use of its skilled men since the Beveridge Committee do not appear to have paid sufficient regard to this all-important factor, although their terms of reference, as mentioned above, draw special attention to it.

3.

One of the main faults which the Committee find with the Army organisation of its skilled men is that there is too much skill "standing by" unused in the Army at any one time, and that better use could be made of skilled men who, for various reasons, are not fully exercising their skill. While some improvement (as is mentioned later) can and will be made in this respect, the Committee have again paid insufficient regard to the operational reasons responsible for this result. In this matter, too, the Committee have themselves (paragraph 31) put the point very clearly:

"war in certain phases involves standing by to act rather than acting; in war, engineers, like others, must be kept waiting either not fully occupied or occupied otherwise than as engineers, but ready to use their skill in emergencies at a moment's notice. We certainly do not reject a claim to hold power in reserve for emergencies".

It is a clear deduction from the Committee's statement just quoted that men who, by reason of the Army's commitments are "standing by to act" should not be counted as "misfits" in the Army organisation. This particularly applies to Royal Engineer units, who contain a higher proportion of such men than other corps which have a more static role in war.

The Royal Engineer unit engaged in field operations must have at its disposal skilled men competent to tackle many varied forms of skilled work at short notice in an emergency, when there is no time, without holding up operations, to summon skilled men from the resources of a central pool; the Beveridge Committee confined their enquiries to Engineer units under the prevailing conditions in this country, but if they had reviewed the work of Royal Engineer units under war conditions in the Middle East, for example, it is safe to say that a very different picture would have emerged. Further, the conditions of an invasion of this country would call into full use that operational organisation of Royal Engineer units which, while present conditions continue at home, may in some ways appear wasteful of skilled men; and it must be remembered that if invasion happens, the Army will be granted no margin of time in which to repair deficiencies of organisation.
4. Again, the Army cannot escape holding pools of tradesmen to meet wastage in the many overseas theatres of war. The problem of employing these to the fullest advantage while they are waiting dispatch is a difficult one, for the sailing arrangements of troop ships and their convoys preclude such long term planning as would enable these waiting men to be at the lathe until the last moment before embarkation. But the War Office are doing what is possible by decentralising the arrangements for the use of such waiting men to Commands at home; better results are probable from such local arrangements, particularly as local solutions of accommodation difficulties (a big factor in this connection) can usually be arrived at more quickly.

5. The generally adverse verdict returned by the Beveridge Committee to the question whether the Army makes full use of its skilled men is based on personal interviews which the Committee held with 139 serving soldiers, whose names were selected in roughly equal numbers from lists furnished by employers and trade unions, with one or two from other sources. The Committee have classified these men in the various categories set out in Appendix A of their Report; these categories are not repeated here, but relate to the degree to which the Army is using their skill in their present employment. The gravamen of the charge made by the Beveridge Committee lies in the large proportion of the 139 men whom they placed in category VI, which they divided into two sub-divisions:

(a) men who though mustered in a Service trade suited to their civilian skill have not been working at that trade to any substantial extent, and

(b) men not mustered in a Service trade or wrongly mustered.

The Committee placed respectively 36 and 38 men in categories VI(a) and VI(b); but they did not have before them the man's "trade history" since he joined the Army, and they did not relate his employment at the time of the interview to the operational background of his unit. In two different ways the operational role of the unit directly affects the conditions of the skilled man's employment: his unit may (unknown to him) be earmarked for early dispatch overseas, or again it may be allotted to a vital operational role in the defence of this country. In either case, the point is that there must inevitably be some proportion of the skilled men of a unit who are "standing by to act" and are not fully and continuously employed at their skilled trade. The War Office have re-examined each individual case, and in doing so have taken account both of the factors just mentioned, which were not known to the Beveridge Committee when they interviewed the men, and also of the result of subsequent trade-testing of the men - where this was necessary for correct classification. In the result, it is found that only 16 and 20 men respectively should be classified in categories VI(a) and VI(b) - a reduction of some 50 per cent. On the other hand category I(a), to which the Committee assigned those men already in a Service trade and making full use of their civilian skill in that trade, includes 49 men as reviewed by the War Office in the light of fuller information, as against 15 so allocated by the Committee. The small number of cases of alleged misuse of skill in the Army enquired into by the Committee was, in any case, perhaps a slender foundation to carry the far-reaching conclusions based upon it, and in view of the careful check-up of each case by the Army Authorities, it seems possible that more exhaustive examination would have led the Committee into placing a very much higher percentage of the men examined into categories denoting that their skill was being reasonably used.

6. The original request placed before the Beveridge Committee on behalf of the Army was for a small number of highly skilled men, of the armament artificer type. Following representations by Sir William Beveridge, at a subsequent conference, as to the extent of dilution of skilled men in the Army, the numbers asked for were raised considerably. As a result of further discussions following the issue of this Second Report of the Committee, the War Office have reverted to the original request for a small number of highly skilled men only. War is not static, and as the Army becomes involved in operations in other theatres of war, and as armoured formations take an increasing part in those operations, the demand for skilled men for repair and maintenance work will inevitably increase.
7. In the foregoing paragraphs it is suggested that the Beveridge Committee have failed to give due weight to the operational and maintenance commitments of an Army organised as an efficient fighting machine, and further, that in investigating the 139 cases, on the results of which the Committee primarily based their adverse judgement on the Army's use of its skilled personnel, the Committee lacked information on certain important aspects which might well have resulted in reducing the assessed "misfits" by at least 50 per cent. The Beveridge Committee have nevertheless performed a most useful piece of work in pointing to weak places in the Army system of using its skilled men, and the Committee's recommendations and suggestions are in all instances being followed up and implemented as rapidly as possible, having regard to those overriding considerations of military efficiency mentioned above. The more important of these recommendations, and the action which is being taken on them are set out below. (References are to paragraphs of the Second Report).

8. Review of Army Establishments. (Paragraphs 31 to 33.)

The Committee have suggested such a review with the dual aim of reducing the number of tradesmen in a particular establishment and also of substituting semi-skilled for skilled men where possible. The Committee also consider that this review should take account of the possibility of economising men of rare skill by pooling resources between different corps and units. Such a review should produce useful results and the War Office have appointed a committee to undertake the task; this committee has been instructed to lay down the broad lines of policy to be applied to all unit establishments embodying tradesmen; the detailed work of examining the very large number of unit establishments affected, in order to translate this policy into terms of ranks and trades in each unit, is being pursued by an appropriate sub-committee which will co-opt the necessary technical experts for the particular arms under examination.

9. Scrutiny of Army man-power with a view to employing all skilled men on skilled tasks (paragraphs 16, 39, 40, 41 and 62 of the Report are relevant).

Much has already been done in the direction indicated by the Beveridge Report. In the course of the last eight months a detailed scrutiny of the whole man-power resources of the Army has been undertaken in order to relate the forces available to the operational requirements of each several theatre of war, and this large-scale review has been undertaken from the prime standpoint of economising man-power and (incidentally) of substituting women for men where possible. The review was not intended, of course, to go into the details of the internal make-up of the personnel of units and the appropriate numbers of skilled men employed; but it will have ensured that the numbers of units required for the operational commitments of the Army are no more than are absolutely necessary.

In the course of that review, many new units using tradesmen have been, and are still being formed, especially R.A.O.C. units: thus there are at times small surpluses in a trade, required for these newly-formed units and soon absorbed by them. Such surpluses are attached, pending absorption, to existing units where accommodation exists; any form of "holding" units for such men would waste man-power in "overheads".

The Beveridge Committee have arranged to furnish the War Office with lists of skilled men now serving, received from employers and trade unions, where a man's skill is said not to be effectively used (paragraph 16). The Committee have suggested that the machinery for finding and selecting men for Service trades should be strengthened and should make use of personal interviews by experts rather than examination of paper records (paragraph 40). Again, they suggest that too often laymen in the Army have been asked to do the job of an expert engineer in this connection (paragraph 41). Where enquiry reveals that a man's skill is not being fully employed in his present post, they suggest that the many barriers operating against their free transfer to posts where their skill can be better employed should be removed.

A word may be said on this last question. It must be remembered that the Army of today is made up of varied elements: the pre-war Territorial...
Army in which, except for specialist units, no attempt was normally made to fit a man's skill in his civil trade into similar skilled work in the Army; the militia influx just before the war, which broadly speaking a similar remark applies; and the huge intake of men which the Army had to force into units and organised and trained to meet a dire and imminent peril of invasion, a process which clearly precluded the possibility of carefully placing square pegs into square holes. Further, the second-line Territorial units raised when the Territorial Army was doubled, before the war, comprised many units, raised, on the initiative of the War Office, by large public utility undertakings and big business firms, etc., and it was implicit in the conditions of their formation that the men of these units should continue to serve together. So far as skilled men were concerned, before the Beveridge Committee was set up, the Army had tried hard to overtake these accumulated handicaps and had, in fact, embarked on upwards of 80,000 men who have been re-allocated to employment appropriate to their skill. In individual cases, a higher N.C.O. rank which a man has acquired in his trade may be a bar to his placing in a tradesman's post in the lowest rank, but this bar is not absolute. Further, in individual cases the Army may lose more in its fighting efficiency by displacing a man who is a key man in a fighting sub-unit than it would gain by putting that man into a tradesman's job; it is clearly not expedient, in exceptional cases to apply the accepted principle blindly without regard to the effect on fighting units.

Two other points should be mentioned. Every potential tradesman withdrawn from the ranks of fighting units for the purpose of being trained must be replaced in that unit by a trained fighting soldier. It is not sufficiently appreciated that it takes, on the average, between six and eight months to train a fighting soldier. This factor should be considered as being one of the necessary breaks upon the wholesale withdrawal of trained soldiers from units for long courses of specialised trade training. The other point to be borne in mind is this: It may be urged that the Army has had over two years in which to put its house in order as to making the best use of its skilled men. This is quite wrong. The Army was not in a position to tamper in any way with its dangerously slender fighting resources until the imminent risk of invasion, which persisted from June, 1940, had somewhat receded with the outbreak of the Russian war in June, 1941. The intricate and large scale administrative arrangements, coupled with the increase in non-fighting overheads, which are necessary for the big task of selecting and training many thousands of potential tradesmen, could not be put into full effect until quite recently. This was the main reason why the Army accepted Sir William Beveridge's invitation to increase its demand for tradesmen. If these could have been found from civil life it would have suited the Army better as, apart from avoiding the administrative confusion caused by re-training its own men, it would have avoided the waste of purely military training which had been given to the potential tradesmen already in the Army.

It must not be overlooked that 58,000 officers and men have been released from the Army since the outbreak of war for work of national importance, and the bulk of these were highly skilled personnel in various walks of life.

With these reservations, there is, however, an admitted need for improving the machinery for dealing with those cases of "misfit" tradesmen which are brought to notice. The War Office are setting up Tradesmen's Interview Boards in each Command which will interview all such cases falling within the particular Command. Each man's trade mustering in the Army will be scrutinised in relation to his skilled trade and qualifications in civil life; and where it is expedient his trade classification will be upgraded, or if necessary he will be transferred to more suitable employment in another unit.

These enquiries will in the first instance be confined to men of engineering and electrical trades.
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These Boards will have a permanent president, a representative of the Ministry of Labour and representatives of the arms of the Services immediately concerned, and they will pay special attention to skilled men whose trade in civil life is "single purpose". The report of the interview and any necessary trade test which follows it will be made direct by the Board and Testing Centre respectively to the War Office, and the personnel will then be considered for re-posting, transfer or return to civil life as may be expedient.

This procedure has been agreed with Sir William Beveridge, and a special branch is being set up under the Adjutant-General to deal expeditiously with this work.

10. Improvement of Posting Arrangements. (Paragraph 36.)

There is admittedly room for improvement here. Attainment of the ideal whereby every man with skilled qualifications is placed, on entering the Army, where he is most wanted is largely bound up with the alteration in the system of enlistment referred to in paragraph 43 of the Report and commented on separately below (paragraph 13). Pending the major changes there announced, improved methods of selection and posting have been introduced by the War Office to make the most of the existing Army training centre organisation.

11. Improvement of Trade Testing. (Paragraph 37.)

The Beveridge Committee have given some useful advice for improving trade testing and technical training in the Army, and their suggestions will be adopted so far as they are compatible with the operational considerations which must govern the organisation of the Army as a fighting machine. The War Office consider that the necessary technical advice should be readily available to higher commanders and staffs and to unit commanders. They are therefore appointing at once a lieutenant-colonel with the necessary technical knowledge to the staff of each Command to give such technical advice and to supervise technical training and trade testing. In addition, the staff for inspecting and supervising the various trade training establishments is being strengthened. Incidentally, the Committee in their Report (paragraph 37) mention representations made to them that tests, fair in themselves, have sometimes been made unfair by failure on the part of the Army to provide suitable tools at its trade testing centres. The specific complaints made to the Committee have subsequently been investigated by a joint enquiry of the Beveridge Committee and of the War Office, and have been shown to be entirely devoid of foundation.

12. A corps of Mechanical Engineers. (Paragraph 44.)

The increasing mechanisation of the Army has forced to the front the question whether all mechanical maintenance should not be concentrated in one corps. This is a problem which was explored more than once in peacetime, but is one of increasing urgency in an Army where armoured divisions are assuming an ever larger role. It is, however, necessary to bear in mind whether the major changes in Army organisation which would be involved by inter alia, the concentration of the mechanical maintenance duties of all existing corps in one corps, can be undertaken in the middle of a war. Further, the fact that large parts of the British Army are engaged in active operations overseas renders the concentration of all mechanical maintenance duties into one Corps a matter of great difficulty. That is a matter of high policy to be decided on the highest level. In the meantime, the pros and cons of the question have been remitted to a committee of three senior members of the War Office staff who are themselves of high standing and long experience in the business world. Their report, which will shortly be made, will have to be considered in the light of the practical considerations just mentioned.
Here again the Army inherits a system which it would be glad to change. The present system of enlistment for Corps is, however, one of the major features of the pre-war Army organisation and is based upon feelings of local sentiment and tradition about which counties and towns are at least as jealous as the regiments of the Army concerned. The present system is built upon a framework of regimental Record Offices and Pay Offices, with ramifications through every aspect of Army administration. A radical and sweeping change in this system would involve a large measure of immediate dislocation and inconvenience and would give rise to legal difficulties. To attempt such a change at the present juncture might be very dangerous. Nevertheless, far from adopting a negative attitude to this proposal, the War Office had it under close examination for many months before the Beveridge Committee was set up, and has already introduced an experimental system of intake for general service with a view to testing the possibilities and measuring the difficulties. For example, there has been set up in Scotland a training centre, the intake into which will be enlisted for general service. Recruits will be retained at the centre for the period of their basic training, and during that period they will undergo selection tests with a view to finding out the arm, corps and employment in the Army for which they are most suited. If it is found to be practicable, on administrative and other grounds, the War Office will introduce enlistment for the Army instead of for Corps. In the meantime, improved methods of selection and posting, as mentioned above, are being applied to Army intakes of men.

The review of the Army’s organisation of its skilled tradesmen undertaken by the Beveridge Committee - a body of experts with a detailed knowledge of the organisation of technical skill in civil industry - would almost inevitably bring to its task the standards of industrial practice. A Committee so constituted could not be expected to appreciate the extent to which the ideal organisation has to be subordinated to serve the ends of operational efficiency. In this Paper the War Office have endeavoured to supply the necessary corrective from the military standpoint. This is not to say that the Beveridge Committee have not performed a most useful task, and the very fact that they have thrown up in sharp relief those ways in which the Army organisation is wrongly conceived or uneconomical of skilled personnel has made it incumbent on the War Office to examine the Beveridge Committee’s recommendations and suggestions more closely, in order to show cause why military exigencies in some cases preclude their implementation. It is therefore in no sense of carping criticism that the remarks in this Paper are made and the War Office desire to record their appreciation of the very valuable survey of skilled man-power in the Army which the Committee have completed, and which will, it is hoped, help to achieve that balanced compromise between operational needs and economy of skilled personnel which will produce the most efficient fighting machine.