

## MAIN CHANGE 1—SELECTION FOR SUB-SPECIALISATION EARLIER IN NEW ENTRY TRAINING

Hitherto, new entries have been selected for sub-specialisation at the end of their training at HMS *Mercury*. In future, they will be selected at the 22nd week and then devote much of the next 5 weeks to sub-specialist training, the remainder being spent on common skills. The new entry course has been cut by 2 weeks, because of a reduction in 'opposite subjects' instruction, to an overall course length of 27 weeks. Ratings will be drafted to sea on completion of their training as either JRO/RO3 (G), (T) or (W). The first ratings trained under this scheme will be joining the fleet by the end of this year.

The rules for advancement to RO2 (G), (T) and (W) remain the same except that there will be changes in the examination. At the time this article was drafted a DCI(RN) announcing the revised able rate examination was under consideration. In essence it will mean that the professional qualifications for advancement to the RO2 level will consist of practical skills, certificates of competency and oral examinations in subjects appropriate to a rating's sub-specialisation. Full details of subjects to be included in the examination, standards of knowledge and passing percentages will be contained in the new Communication Training Manual. (See details below.)

In order to keep ratings prepared for this examination, refresher courses will be held at HMS *Mercury*, STC Devonport and STC Kranji. The course will be of 2 weeks' duration and will include the examination. The dates of these courses will be given in the DCI(RN) announcing the revised examinations and it will be up to ships to arrange direct with HMS *Mercury* or one of the STCs for their ratings to undergo this course. It is in the interest of RO3s to work for, and pass, this examination as soon as they possibly can because failure to pass by the time they are due to be rated RO2 will result in a delay in being advanced with subsequent disadvantages.

## MAIN CHANGE 2—ABOLITION OF SUB-SPECIALIST COURSES AND THE INTRODUCTION OF LEADING RATE COURSES

The last sub-specialist course completed in HMS *Mercury* in October. All JROs, RO3s and RO2s selected for sub-specialisation but who have not

done the course have been made sub-specialists by the addition of the necessary suffix after their rate.

This means of course that a number of ratings will not receive any formal sub-specialist training at HMS *Mercury* until they are selected for a leading rate course. However, with the abolition of sub-specialist courses, ratings will find a better chance to improve their skills at sea because it will no longer be necessary to withdraw them from ships after approximately 6 months in the able rate.

The first leading rate courses will start in January, 1970. They will be held at HMS *Mercury* and their duration will be; LRO(G) and (W)—13 weeks and LRO(T)—10 weeks. Selection for the course will be done from a roster which, initially, will be created by a points system based on a ratings last dormant merit points. In addition, highly recommended and younger ratings will receive special roster points. Therefore, subject to drafting requirements, the most highly recommended ratings will be given courses ahead of the others. The course roster will eventually revert to a normal basic date system.

Applications for the Fleet Board examination to qualify for LRO will be accepted up until December 31, 1969. This method of qualifying for LRO will cease once the Fleet Boards for these applicants have been completed. To cater for those who are unable to get a course for some time, the provisional method of examination for LRO will be introduced next year on the same lines as for petty officer. Success will enable a man to be rated RO1, and subsequently A/LRO, but he will be required to complete successfully an LRO (Q) course before he can be confirmed.

The introduction of the leading rate courses is a result of the shortcomings associated with the Fleet Board method. The failure rate has been high. Investigations have shown that this has resulted from inadequate facilities and time for ratings in ships to prepare themselves. In addition, the Fleet Board method does little to prepare a rating to fulfil the function of a junior supervisor in frigate type ships.

## LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR LEADING RATES

A good deal of thought has recently been given to the problem of leadership training for leading rates. There are several ways of implementing this essential form of training, and of the numerous possibilities, two emerge as likely methods. One was to set up a leadership training section within HMS *Mercury*, and the other to make use of those establishments who already conduct this training. A closer look at the suggestion of providing leadership training within *Mercury* showed that it is not a viable proposition, and one of the reasons is that the only time ratings could do the course would be at the same time as qualifying for the leading rate. This means that ratings, on average, would do the course approximately 18 months before being rated. Clearly there is a disadvantage with this method as it could be quite a long time before they would be able to make use of the

training. It has, therefore, been decided to adopt the second method whereby all acting leading rates undergo the course at one of the establishments that provide leadership courses. It will, however, be up to ships and establishments to release ratings as soon as possible after being rated acting leading hand. Full details of these courses can be found in current DCIs.

## **NEW COMMUNICATION TRAINING MANUAL**

BR 1792, Communication Training Manual has been revised and will be promulgated early in 1970. In its new form as RNCP 15, there are considerable changes and all communication ratings are advised to read it. It is not just a re-write of BR 1792. It will be seen that a number of pages at the beginning of the book are devoted to defining the capabilities of ratings in each sub-specialisation, that is, Job Definitions. What are these job definitions? They lay down all the main requirements for a man to do his job and thus ensure he is taught those things which he actually requires to be able to do.

This enables a more realistic syllabus to be produced and more time devoted to the essential subjects. It also provides those officers and ratings outside the Branch with a clear picture of the abilities of Communicators. A job definition for each rating of each sub-specialisation has been produced and a close look at these, together with the standards of knowledge tables, will reveal the following two salient points:

1. *RO2s (T) and (W):*

Will, in future, learn the procedure aspects of AT either by PCT before being drafted to a shore station or during their leading rate's course.

2. *LROs (W), (Q) and RSs (W), (Q):*

Have had the CST content of their courses reduced to the minimum amount necessary to enable them to carry out the duty of the senior communication rating in harbour.

## **MANAGEMENT TRAINING**

Another item which will be included in higher rate courses from January 1, 1970, is 'Management Training'. The LRO (Q) syllabus will include 2 sessions covering the broad principles of management and PO (Q) 6 sessions. The instruction will be given by chief petty officers or petty officers who will have attended courses at Portsmouth School of Management and Work Study. This training is not the same as that given to senior rates during a management PCT. The PCT week is devoted specifically to communication management, whereas the qualifying course content will be the techniques of management in broader terms.

## **SPECIAL FOR THOSE RATINGS WHO BECOME RO2 (G), (T) or (W) WITHOUT ANY FORMAL SPECIALIST TRAINING**

The introduction of the revised training pattern has enabled a number of ratings to become RO2 (G),

(T) or (W) without any formal specialist training. This point was appreciated and accepted when the scheme was being formulated. However, in the interests of the Service and the ratings themselves, it is important that every effort be made to provide some form of specialist training. It is realised that this may be difficult in some ships and in view of this, signal officers and senior rates are strongly advised to make use of the refresher courses referred to earlier in this article. Although the course has been designed for RO3s prior to the examination for RO2, any RO2 who has not received any specialist training would benefit by it. If any RO2 who has not done a specialist course can be spared arrangements should be made for him to do one of these courses either at HMS *Mercury*, STC Devonport or STC Kranji.