

LET'S TALK SHOP!

WARRANT COMMUNICATION OFFICER

Since the last issue of THE COMMUNICATOR the introduction of the W.C.O. has been announced in A.F.Os. The first course is to start in January, 1948, at Leydene.

The syllabus for this course has not been an easy one to prepare, because of the different background of the candidates. The principle adopted is that as much of the course as possible should be joint instruction, but in some subjects the ex-Buntings and ex-Sparkers have to be divided to give the needed bias in "opposite" subjects. Incidentally, the ex-Sparkers are to be given plenty of practice in cultivating bridge sense.

It seems likely that there will be a fair number of vacancies for W.C.O. for some years to come, but competition for selection will be fierce. Would-be candidates can give themselves a helping hand by delving into the "opposite" subject in their spare time, but remember that officer-like qualities are a deciding factor in selection.

FUTURE OF THE COMMUNICATION RATING

Rumours have probably reached stations abroad that it is under consideration to amalgamate the Sigs. and Tels. and form the Communication rating. There is no smoke without fire, but set your minds at rest. As far as we can see at present, there is no likelihood of any such amalgamation for many years. The standard of operators in the V/S and W/T branches now isn't as high as we would wish. If the two branches were amalgamated the over-all standard would inevitably fall.

TEACHING THEORY AND TECHNICAL TO W/T RATINGS

When the "L" Branch is fully manned, the standard of theory and technical knowledge required of the Telegraphist Branch should not be so high as in former times. Some steps are already being taken in this direction. A technique is gradually being evolved in Signal School for teaching radio by popular methods—with the accent on demonstration rather than on basic theory.

CLOSING OF H.M.S. SCOTIA

We must say goodbye to H.M.S. *Scotia*, where nearly 22,000 young Communication ratings have been trained, as this Establishment is about to close down. In future, Special Service Signalmen and Telegraphists will be trained at R.N. Signal Schools, Cookham Camp (Chatham), and Fort Southwick (Portsmouth).

R.N. SIGNAL SECTION, VICARAGE ROAD, DEVONPORT

We offer many congratulations to this establishment on the way they have settled in to their new abode. Rumour has it that all the Chiefs and P.Os. of the Devonport Division are now fully qualified dog-watch gardeners.

TOUCH-TYPING

The six-week touch-typing courses are now carried out concurrently at Signal Schools, Leydene, Cookham and Vicarage Road for training Signalmen and Telegraphists from fleet and shore establishments who can be spared without relief. These courses are becoming increasingly popular in spite of the difficulty of reduced complements and it is hoped to keep the courses full during 1948.

C.in.C., H.F., has set up a small Touch-Typing School in Portsmouth Dockyard for use of ratings from the H.F. who can only be spared part time. Besides these courses, all new entries, whether Boys or adult ratings, are taught touch-typing during their preliminary training. Some ratings have passed through Leydene who can now type an S.B.X. at 95 per cent., but with a hand-written S.B.X. they only obtained 50 per cent. Just a sign of the times.

Attention is again invited to the fact that touch-typing will become a compulsory examination subject on 1st July, 1948, and that when courses for advancement are involved, candidates are expected to have reached the touch-typing standard before the start of their course.

TELEPRINTING

As a result of the closing down of *Scotia*, the major portion of teleprinting training will be transferred to Leydene and Fort Southwick. At these two establishments, full switchboard and teleprinting operating will be taught as soon as the equipment is transferred.

NEW SIGNAL BOOKS

You will have seen A.F.O. 3919/47 which announces:

1. That conversion courses on the new books will commence next year, be of one week's duration and start on the first and third Mondays of each month. It is hoped that as many leading rates and above as possible will be spared for the courses.
2. All courses which finish on or after 1st July will be taught the new books.

V/S SIGNALLING

Judging by some examination results seen in Signal School, the standard of semaphore isn't nearly as high as it should be, and a number of ratings have failed in examination as a result. In the words of one of our older members, "In my young days, we used to be able to make semaphore with our feet and read it with our eyes shut—times have changed."

Notes from the Mediterranean tell us that there is plenty of flag signalling, and that those who think the art is dead had better get a draft chit to that station.

V/S COMMENTARY

We are often being asked two questions, one about Dressing Lines and the other about the "Paying-off Pendant." Here are the questions and answers!

Dressing Lines

Q. If more flags than shown in the V.M.H. are required, what flags/pendants does one use?

A. This should be laid down by the senior officer of the squadron or flotilla. This ensures uniformity amongst ships of the same squadron/flotilla.

If you are "nobody's baby" you cannot do better than repeat the appropriate line, omitting /SN /PP or FL Y.

Most of these troubles will disappear when the new signal flags and dressing line plate are produced.

Paying-off Pendant

Q. Are there any rules laid down for the size of the pendant and the occasions on which it should be used?

A. There are no rules about the size, it being considered that, as the pendant is traditional, the size can be left to the individual ship. Before the war the

occasions for its use were usually laid down in the Station Order Books.

As a point of interest due to the fact that the paying-off pendant is a glorified masthead pendant, it is doubtful whether a paying-off pendant should be worn at the same time as an Admiral's flag.

A case in point was, in 1932, when Admiral Sir Ernle Chatfield (now Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield) left Malta for the United Kingdom, flying his flag in H.M.S. *Queen Elizabeth*. Then the ship's company provided a paying-off "flag", the size of which was 32 breadths (*i.e.*, 24 ft. by 36 ft.)

W/T COMMENTARY

Owing to the advent of the Warrant and Commissioned Communication Officer described above, this will be the last W/T Commentary to be written by a Commissioned Telegraphist, as such. The old Warrant Telegraphist, however, will continue to crop up in the news, as recently did Mr. Kirkwood, King's Messenger, who had the onerous duty of taking the Sixteen Nations "Aid to Europe" Agreement to Washington. Many Telegraphists will remember him

as W/T3 at Leydene during 1943-1944, a time when Naval W/T procedure was undergoing a major change.

Even in these austere days the W/T Department has its bright moments. First there was the rating who thought that the object of W/T Fixed Services was "to avoid overworking the W/T Staff"; and then there was the Yeoman (Q) who said that "W/T hazards are skip distance, poor or weak transmitters and atmospherics." Our special thanks go, however, to the Sub-Lieutenant (Q) who remarked in his examination paper that "a transmitter has to be very high and big to transmit to submarines."

To all Telegraphists, wherever you are, we wish you as happy a Christmas and as bright a New Year as the austerity conditions of the present permit.

"L" BRANCH COMMENTARY

During the period under review, the number of classes under training has fallen to the very low level of two classes of R.E.M.2 (Q), but, in case this statement leads one to assume that the instructional staff is having an easy time, we hasten to add that several pastimes have been arranged for them, such as T/P maintenance courses, overhauling and modifying instructional equipment.

The tempo of training is again increasing, and by the time this goes into print R/MI will once more be scratching around for instructors, classrooms and equipment. A new, and novel, training commitment is in the offing, for there is a very strong possibility that we shall soon have to commence instruction in D/F calibration. Not to be caught napping in this direction, we have started to collect the necessary equipment and seek the assistance and advice of A.S.E. and the Portsmouth D/F Calibrating Officer.

We welcome Lt Cmdr. (L) W. Alder as the first "L" Branch officer to become the head of our department. As an old member of the Communication Branch he will find many friends among the ex-W/T officers and ratings in the "L" Branch staff. His predecessor, Lt. Cmdr. J. W. Meadows, has gone to H.M.S. *Vanguard*, taking with him the gratitude and appreciation of the ex-Chief and Petty Officer Telegraphists (known in some quarters as "Meadows's Private Navy"), for whom he strove so hard to obtain the best conditions of service.

The process of transferring large numbers of ratings to the "L" Branch is bound to produce quite a few queries, and we think it might help some of our readers if the answers to a few of them were given here.

Q. Are tool kits being issued to Radio Electrician ratings?

A. At present there is no authority for the issue of toolkits to R.E. ratings, but the matter has been

under consideration for some time and it is expected that an A.F.O. on the subject will shortly be issued.

Q. Leading Telegraphists (W/T 2) transferring to the "L" Branch. What happens to their position on the advancement roster?

A. They are transferred to the Radio Electricians' roster in the same relative position as they held for Petty Officer Telegraphists, and if they reach the top of the roster, and there is a vacancy, they will be advanced to R.E., irrespective of whether or not they have done the conversion course.

Q. When are ex-W/T ratings likely to do the conversion course?

A. They are called in by drafting authorities according to drafting and various other considerations. Neither *Collingwood* nor H.M. Signal School has a hand in it.

Finally, in case members of the "L" Branch are beginning to wonder if they are ever going to sea in these austere days, a recent Admiralty letter states that the following may be counted as sea service:

Shore W/T and Royal Naval Air Stations home and abroad.

Instructors' jobs in training establishments.

Combined Operations.