

RE CONDITIONS IN DISPERSAL DEPOT.

*Indian &  
Malay*

Sleeping Accommodation:- This is provided by belt tents which are not in good condition. The tents leak when the rain comes down. At times the water overflows the shallow trench around the tent thus going through the bedding of the men sleeping in it. I remember while sleeping at night the water was dripping through the tent right on my face and around my legs. I had to cover myself with the great coat that I had. The other men who were in the tent were in a similar predicament. We are provided with mattress covers called "Pilas". We have to find our own grass. The ground on which the men sleep is none too level which causes great discomfort to the injuries of the men from the north.

Meals:- (a) Breakfast:- Two boiled eggs, bread and butter, meal meal porridge. 9 o'clock tea.

((b) Lunch:- Potatoes, beef or mutton fine stamped mealies made into stew.

(c) Supper:- I did not have supper. Had a snack at the Y.M.C.A. I must say that the breakfast is the best of all. In order to satisfy their lunch hunger the men save their eggs and use them at lunch time. The lunch is in no way appreciated or enjoyed by the men. At time they get bread beans which is uncooked and also the whole meal is not properly cooked thus giving the men digestive troubles. The men are totally dissatisfied about the meal in the Dispersal Depot. I did not see curry or rice, although it is an I.M.C. I questioned one of the cooks and the only reply I got was that if the material is provided we can give the men a better meal. I am sorry to say that such diet given to unfit men who are awaiting discharge from the Army makes their condition even worse to fit themselves in civil life.

Recreation:- All kinds of recreation apparatus are provided to battalions and units. I may say it will be argued why should unfit men have any kind of sport which may be harmful to their own personal self. To this argument which may arise my only reply is surely such things as playing cards, dominoes, draught boards, as well as dart games could be provided to the men so that their minds could be occupied in happy thoughts than the discontent. These indoor games are not strenuous in any way at all. No cigarettes are provided by anybody whatsoever. The men crave for this little luxury.

Men in the Dispersal Depot:- Some of the men awaiting discharge have been told by the officer or N.C.O. (European) that they are discharged. Then the question is asked if you have any claim and the reply is yes. They are told that they will have to wait for their pension for quite a lengthy period. Some of them have been on the waiting list for months ranging from one month to nearly six months. Having spoken with these men they seem to be utterly disgusted in the delay of their pension. They are so much demoralised that some of them after seeing the state of their comrades say that they have no claim against the Government whatsoever. Their only dread is the abominable condition and treatment in the Dispersal Depot. They are only to glad to get away from this "Black Hovel". Having spoken to these men who threw their pension away their remarks are "I have given the Military the best of my life and I am not going to ruin myself waiting here any longer. "If a satisfactory solution is found I am sure those very men would not have thrown their pensions claims away.

Conclusion:- The Military takes on nearly every recruit under the A.I. category. When a man is unfit for any military duties whatsoever the

the Medical Board deems it fit to discharge the soldier. The men have given their service to king and country to their best of their ability. After having taken the best out of a man's life who had gone through life and death to be discarded in such a manner as if they are nothing but frayed dirty rags. It is more that a man could endure of. At this stage of a man's last military contact he should be kept in the Depot in a most suitable environment and a sense of cheerfulness so that on his discharge from Military back into civil life he could glorify the Military which will do a great deal of good to future recruits but instead of all this he hurls curses and obscene words for his past Military life which is most harmful in this present crisis.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.QUESTION NO. 13.FRIDAY, 6th MARCH, 1942.

Mrs. Ballinger asked the Minister of Defence:

- (1) What provision has been made for the paying out of dependants' allowances to the dependants of African recruits (a) in the larger urban centres and (b) in the rural areas;
- (2) what financial provision is made for the dependants of African soldiers reported missing;
- (3) whether African soldiers, when they sign allotment forms in favour of dependants, are at the same time required to sign stop orders in respect of their taxes, authorizing monthly deductions from the dependants' allowances; if so,
- (4) whether such stop order covers accumulated arrears of tax;
- (5) what average monthly amount is deducted from dependants' allowances under this arrangement; and
- (6) whether European recruits are called upon to sign similar stop orders in respect of provincial personal taxes or any other taxes?

REPLY

- (1) Payments are made through Magistrates or Native Commissioners.
- (2) The same principles apply as for European volunteers.
- (3) Members of the Native Military Corps may sign stop orders authorizing monthly deductions from payments due to dependants in respect of tax dues. They are not compelled to do so.
- (4) Yes, if the member so desires.
- (5) The amounts vary and it is not possible in present circumstances to conduct the necessary research in order to furnish an answer to this question.
- (6) A European soldier may be placed under stoppage in respect of his portion of basic pay upon receipt of any such request from the Receiver of Revenue in terms of the Income Tax Act.

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