

CHAPTER 13.

EDUCATION OF INTERNEES

1. The general policy adopted by the Directorate in relation to educational facilities for internees was to permit them every possible opportunity to further their studies. This policy was considered desirable for two reasons, viz. To avoid any possible complaint by the enemy which might be followed by the withdrawal of privileges enjoyed by British nationals in their hands, and to give internees the opportunity to employ their time usefully. The later reason was of paramount importance as internees with no opportunity to employ their time usefully would either become demoralised by failure to exercise their minds, or would be inclined to plot escapes or cause other annoyances to staffs of camps. Internees were therefore encouraged at all times to participate in the educational activities available in their camps.

2. It was recognised that instructors would have to be drawn from the ranks of the internees and that such instructors would tend to postulate nationalistic doctrines and patriotism. From time to time the scheme was criticised on that account; but such a defect was unavoidable and was best controlled by local camp authorities using their common sense.

3. Fees charged to internees for these examinations were the same as those payable by the public as it was considered undesirable to remit or reduce fees and so give interned persons an advantage over other students. Supervision was effected by University representatives who were given assistance by Educational officers at the camps.

4. At this stage it was decided to issue general censorship instructions regarding the education of internees, providing for facilities for self-study during hours of leisure and for tuition by fellow internees at the discretion of Camp Commandants, but in general, internees were not permitted, for security reasons, to undertake correspondence courses. The following regulations regarding the establishment of libraries at camps and the receipt of books etc. are quoted to give some indication of facilities available to internees at this time: -

- Regulation 22 (1) "A library may be established at each internment camp.
- (2) Subject to approval of the Camp Commandant, books received from representatives of the protecting Powers and authorised relief societies may be included in the libraries."
- Regulation 37 (1) "Internees shall be allowed to receive books (other than books containing hostile sentiments or propaganda), music and small musical instruments, but consignments received by the post shall be examined by the Camp Commandant or an officer authorised by him for the purposes of this regulation, who may, at his discretion, withhold any book or piece of music from delivery to the addressee.
- (2) All purchases of books and music by an internee shall be made through the Camp Commandant or an officer so authorised."

It will be noted that these regulations made no provision for books and music to be sent out of camps. This was considered undesirable for security reasons, and books could not therefore be received on loan or from lending libraries.

5. Early requests were made by internees for basic materials required for their studies, including pencils, blackboards, chalk and books etc., and Commands were asked to submit estimates of funds required for initial purchases of these requirements. An amount of 260 pounds was approved for this purpose and further amounts were approved at later stages. When granting approval for the purchase of text books, care was taken to ensure that the most suitable types of books were chosen and for this reason purchases were to be made

upon the advice of competent educational authorities. AAG (Education) was also asked to discuss with appropriate officers in Commands concerned, all matters relating to education projects at camps including the question of the acquisition of text books. By this means very useful libraries became available to the internees, most of whom availed themselves of the opportunity to learn.

6. To further assist in building up libraries, express approval was given for books from University and Public Libraries to be received at interment camps, provided :-

- (a) such books were transferred to camp libraries;
- (b) they were received and held on condition that they remained in the camp libraries until the camps were closed, when they were to be returned to the libraries from which they were originally issued.

7. As mentioned in previous Chapters of this report, certain classes of overseas internees not considered dangerous were granted special concessions. To assist these internees in their studies, they were also permitted to :-

- (a) undertake approved correspondence courses;
- (b) temporarily borrow suitable text books from University lending libraries;
- (c) send examination papers out of their camps for correction.

8. Recognising the desirability of improvement in the use of the English language among Italian internees, directions were issued that facilities for acquiring or improving their knowledge of that language should be made available and that they should be encouraged to pursue such studies. A few German internees expressed their desire to continue their study of the Japanese language, and permission was given for them to receive, subject to censorship, Japanese grammars which the Consul-General for Switzerland offered to supply for their use.

9. Late in 1941 a communication was received from the Commonwealth Forestry Bureau at Canberra asking whether the services of internees could be used in the translation of several scientific forestry publications in various languages. Internee volunteers performed this work satisfactorily and were paid the normal employment rate of 1/- per day which was charged to the Bureau with the cost of stationery used.

10. To consolidate all existing instructions relative to education of internees and to grant rights to internees to borrow and return books under conditions prescribed to ensure adequate security, a complete set of directions was issued early in 1944, vide Appendix 7. These directions remained substantially in force until the closure of the interment camps.

Education of children of internees.

11. The education of children both overseas and local internees was undertaken as an important responsibility. Kindergarten and dining huts, equipped with diet kitchens, and a school building for the elder children, were erected at Tatura Internment Group, where members of families were held. Classes received instruction from suitably qualified persons selected from among the internees and were supervised by a Military Officer with high educational qualifications. Literary, scientific and general subjects were taught and the scheme proved most satisfactory.

12. For family reasons most of the children of overseas internees were retained in their camps but in several instances, with the concurrence of their parents, children under 18 years were transferred to approved schools and other institutions.

13. Japanese children held at Internment Camps were given similar facilities to those mentioned in paragraph 11 above, but were not released from internment to attend schools.