

CHAPTER 20

CLOTHING FOR INTERNEES

1. National Security (Internment Camps) Regulations permitted internees to wear their own clothing to arrange for the necessary replacement of articles of attire. (Reg 17). Provision was also made for the issue of clothing and necessaries to any internee in need of them.

PROCEDURE

2. The issue of appropriate scales of clothing and necessaries for internees was the responsibility of the Master-General of the Ordnance. The Directorate was interested only to the extent that it was necessary to ensure that the Convention was applied as far as practicable to internees in accordance with Empire Policy. For this reason close liaison was maintained with the MGO Branch and where necessary administrative instructions were issued by the Directorate to facilitate or explain implementation of policy.

3. Under the various scales provided, and referred to later, the general conditions of issues to internees were :-

- (a) Issues and replacements were to be made only to internees in need of them and not in possession of the same or similar articles in a satisfactory condition, except that any internee could obtain additional issues or replacements at the discretion of the Camp Commandant, on repayment at prescribed rates.
- (b) If the funds of an internee did not exceed 5 pounds, issues or replacements were to be made free of charge.
- (c) Where an internee had sufficient funds in excess of 5 pounds with which to pay for the full cost of an issue or replacement at the rate prescribed in scales, he was to be debited with the full cost.
- (d) If he had insufficient funds in excess of 5 pounds with which to pay for the cost of an issue or replacement he was to be debited with such part of the cost as would reduce his funds to 5 pounds.
- (e) In no circumstances were the funds of an internee to be reduced below 5 pounds by debits for issues or replacements.

4. It will be realised that Camp Commandants were called upon to exercise care when authorising withdrawals from internees' cash accounts to ensure that they were not without good cause placed in the position of being unable to pay in full for issues or replacements.

5. When an internee was to be transferred from one Internment Camp to another camp or place of detention lists were to be prepared of all issues and replacements in the possession of the internee at the time and a copy sent to the Officer-in-Charge of the camp or other place to which the internee was being transferred, with advice as to which articles were to accompany the internee and which articles were being disposed of.

6. Provision was also made for charges in respect of part worn articles issued to be half of the standard charges shown in scales of issue.

7. Scales of issues covered the following :-

- (a) Issues to females and children, covering all essentials including needles, cotton, thread and buttons etc. Overcoats and warm underclothing were issued promptly to internees arriving from such places as the Straits Settlements etc.;

- (b) Issues to adult male internees, including working jackets and trousers, safety razors etc.;
- (c) Issues of dyed part worn clothing.

8. Special precautions were found necessary to prevent the wearing of khaki clothing by internees, for security reasons. For this reason, directions were issued that internees would not be permitted to purchase possess or wear khaki clothing, and that khaki clothing was not purchased or sold in canteens. Arrangements were made by Commands for the dyeing to a burgundy shade of any such clothing in the possession of internees or stocked by canteens.

9. For security reasons, the retention of burgundy dyed clothing by released internees, or by next-of-kin in the event of death, was considered undesirable and arrangements were therefore made for the withdrawal of such clothing from the possession of released internees or included in the effects of deceased internees. In these circumstances standard rebates were credited to relevant accounts, calculated on a basis of the estimated life of the clothing when issued and the number of months it had been used.

10. As it was considered that released internees should be provided with a reasonable civilian clothing, authority was given for the free issue of a civilian suit and hat to any internee who was not in possession of a reasonable quantity of clothing to enable them to travel, and whose funds did not exceed 5 pounds. The rebate in connection with part-worn dyed clothing, referred to in para 9 above, was not allowed when free issues of civilian clothing were made on release.

11. Under arrangements with the United Kingdom authorities, United Kingdom internees in necessitous circumstances who were being returned to that country were provided with additional clothing for the voyage as considered reasonable. Expenditure on such clothing was not to exceed 10 pounds for each internee concerned. A free issue was made to internees whose funds were less than the equivalent 2 pounds (sterling) and internees with funds in excess of that amount were charged only such portion of the cost as would leave them in possession of the equivalent of 2 pounds sterling.

12. It should be noted that internees were permitted to wear their own civilian clothing at all times and that in cases where they desired to make purchases of suitable clothing from outside sources they were authorised to do so on signature of an order to the supplier and approval by the Camp Commandant.

CLOTHING RATIONING

13. On the introduction of clothing rationing in Australia in June 1942 immediate instructions were issued by the Directorate for procedure to be adopted in connection with civilian internees. Internees held on 15 Jun 1942 were eligible to receive ration books on the same scale as Australian citizens and arrangements were made by Commands concerned to obtain necessary books from Deputy Directors of Rationing on production of necessary identity documents.

14. It is not proposed to deal in detail with procedure in connection with rationing, but the following more important aspects are recorded: -

- (a) Books of internees were held by Camp Commandants and full records were maintained in respect of all purchases made on the internee's behalf.
- (b) Internees could obtain normal issues of rationed items on surrender of the requisite number of coupons, but no coupons were withdrawn in respect of issues of part-worn clothing.
- (c) Other purchases could be made through Canteens or from Civilian supplies in accordance with regulations, subject to surrender of appropriate coupons.

- (d) Coupons in respect of issues were disposed of by each Command in accordance with arrangements made with the local Deputy Director of Rationing, and those for purchases through Canteens Services for disposal.
- (e) Internees apprehended after 15 Jun 1942 were required to hand over part used ration books on arrival at camps.
- (f) On release, internees were handed their ration books against receipts signed by them.
- (g) Ration books and records were transferred with internees being moved from one camp to another and receipts obtained from new Camp Commandants.
- (h) Where internees were received in a destitute condition Commands made application, if necessary, to Deputy Directors of Rationing for special issues of coupons, but normal essential issues were of course made immediately on arrival.

15. To properly administer this matter, approval was given for the appointment of one Staff Sergeant to each internment camp, to be responsible to the Camp Commandant for the compilation of records etc. Careful attention was given to the choice of these personnel.

16. Internees were thus treated liberally in respect of clothes rationing and under instructions issued every effort was made to explain the scheme to them and to secure their co-operation. Firm action was taken, however, when ever any internee attempted to undermine the scheme or to abuse the concessions granted to him. There were few instances of this nature as the procedure specified worked particularly smoothly.