



PART I.—CIVIL (U)

Administration Report of the Government Stores Department for 1940-47

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GOVERNMENT STORES DEPARTMENT.

ADMINISTRATION REPORT FOR 1940-47.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE last issue of the Administration Report of the Government Stores Department was in respect of the year 1939. The activities of the Department, in so far as they related to matters connected with the War, had to be omitted from that Report for reasons of security. I therefore take the opportunity of making a brief reference to such activities in this Report which covers the period 1940-47.

EQUIPMENT—C.D.F., EMERGENCY HOSPITALS, &c.

One of the first tasks which I undertook on my return from furlough in 1938 was the compilation of lists of essential stores that the Department would be called upon to supply in the event of an outbreak of war. Having compiled these lists, I took steps to purchase and hold in stock as many items as possible, to ascertain what quantities could be readily procured in the local market without unduly encroaching upon civilian needs and to organize a system whereby the stores could be promptly issued. With the steps taken it was possible to issue within a few hours of the declaration of World War II. in September, 1939, all stores and materials needed for the mobilization of the Ceylon Defence Force, the equipment of Emergency Hospitals, Internment Camps for enemy aliens, &c.

INCREASED STOCKS.

In order to avoid any breakdown in the work of Government Departments, should Government stocks run low as a result of interference with shipments from the U. K. and adjacent territories, which was inevitable in the event of war, the Department took steps early in 1939 to increase very considerably its normal stocks of the various items. The importation of these extra supplies, apart from resulting in a very considerable saving to Government, enabled all Government Departments including the many Emergency Departments to obtain without delay all stores required by them to function with increased tempo on the outbreak of war with Germany in 1939 and Japan in December, 1941.

SUPPLY OF CLOTHING, &c., TO REFUGEES.

Early in 1942 with the over-running by the Japanese of the Malayan Peninsula and the eventual fall of Singapore, several thousands of civilian refugees and Service personnel arrived in Ceylon with very little clothing and equipment. The additional supplies referred to in the preceding paragraphs, supplemented by generous gifts of clothing from the civilian population of Ceylon, helped in a great measure to relieve the unfortunate plight of these people.

EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS.

The establishment of a large number of Emergency Departments, such as Civil Defence, Food Supplies, War Supplies, Emergency Kachcheries, Price Control and Distribution, Petrol Control, Textile Control, Internal Purchase, &c., threw a very heavy strain on the staff and the stocks of the Government Stores Department. I am happy to be able to report that the Department withstood the strain admirably and at no time, as far as I am aware, was there any breakdown in the activities of any Government Department, due to lack of supplies and equipment.

SHIPMENTS OVERSEAS.

In spite of its heavy commitments, the Government Stores Department was called upon to act as the medium of procurement and supply of a very wide range of articles to be shipped overseas for purposes directly connected with the War effort. This, the Department undertook without any additional staff.

ADDITIONAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF STORES.

Owing to the large quantities of materials needed for the War effort and the consequent curtailment of supplies for other purposes, it was necessary to set up various committees to deal with the various classes of goods. I was called upon to undertake the following additional responsibilities in this connection :—

- (a) Chairman, Cement Allocation Committee—to receive all supplies allotted by the Commander in Chief, Ceylon, for civilian needs and to allocate such supplies to Government Departments, Local Bodies, and the Public.
- (b) Chairman, Steel Allocation Committee, whose functions were similar to those of the Cement Allocation Committee.
- (c) Chairman, Drugs and Supplies Price Fixation and Allocation Committee.
- (d) Member of the Price Control Committee concerned with price fixation in respect of all commodities (other than food and textiles) which were in short supply.

With the cessation of hostilities, the following additional duties were taken over by me :—

- (e) Chairman, Ceylon Government Service Stores Committee.
- (f) Member of the British Stores Disposals Board.
- (g) Superintendent of the Ceylon Government Service Stores Depot which was set up to take over, check, bring to account, and dispose of all U.S.A. Navy, Army, and Air Force stores purchased by the Ceylon Government.

LIAISON OFFICER.

In order to co-ordinate the work relating to the exchange of stores between the Ceylon Government and the three Services—the Royal Navy, the Army, and the R.A.F.—a separate branch was set up in the Government Stores Department in charge of a Liaison Officer. The Services also appointed three Liaison Officers to co-operate with the Government Liaison Officer. These appointments proved to be very helpful in the exchange of stores between the Ceylon Government and the Services and in the procurement of supplies in the local market. The competition between the Ceylon Government and the Services for the very restricted supplies in the local market, which had the tendency to force up prices, was minimized.

DEPARTMENT OF STORES AND SUPPLIES.

In December, 1942, I was called upon by the then Financial Secretary to organize and set up the new Department of Stores and Supplies, the functions of which were to import and distribute to Government Departments as well as to commercial undertakings all stores and materials to be obtained under the Lend-Lease, Cash Purchase, and Bulk Purchase arrangements. The Island's requirements of all materials, of which there was a world-wide shortage, had to be estimated annually in advance, ordered and paid for on a Government to Government basis. In a very short time the activities of the Department assumed vast proportions, involving the hurried recruitment of staff, erection of new warehouses and office and the establishment of an entirely new office system to deal with what proved to be a very intricate system of Lend-Lease accounting demanded by the American authorities. The very large volume of stores ordered under this arrangement, the extent of which can be imagined when it is stated that it represented the Island's requirements, began to arrive in January, 1943. With the convoy system which was in operation at that time and the arrival of several steamers in the Port of Colombo at one and the same time, the Department had a gigantic task to perform in receiving, checking, pricing, and distributing the various items. Mr. H. J. Huxham, C.M.G., the then Financial Secretary, very rightly gave me wide authority in the selection of staff. It must be stated that Government was fortunate in securing the services of a number of very capable staff officers and assistants from the Mercantile community. These officers together with a few officers recruited from the Government Service, were successful in carrying out very efficiently the onerous task the new Department was called upon to undertake. I take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to all concerned.

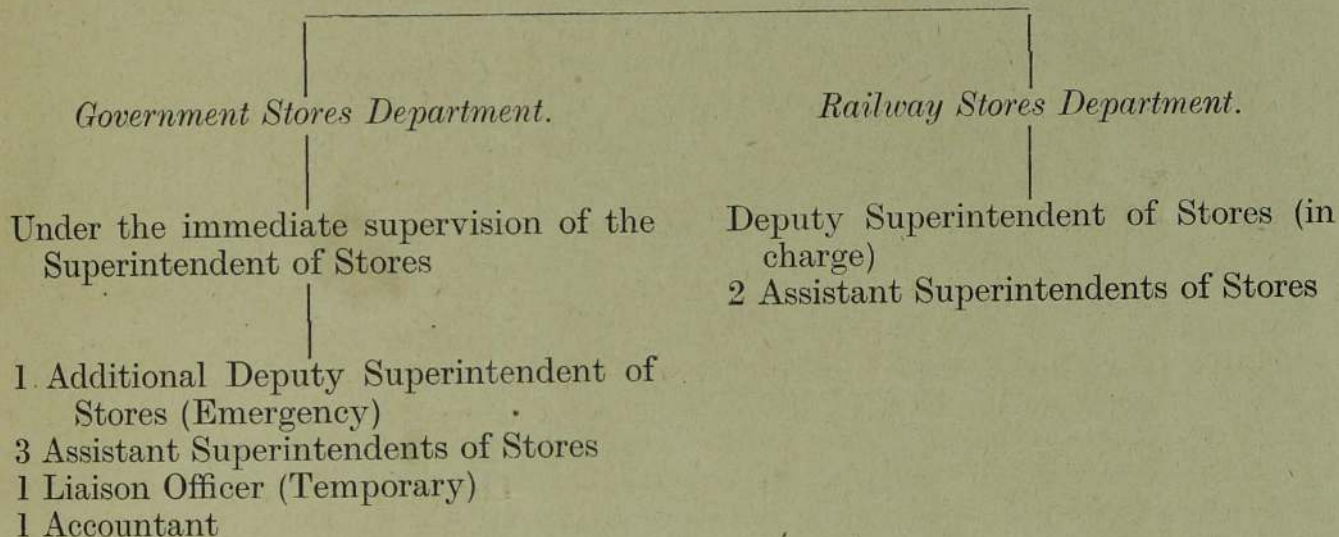
GOVERNMENT EXPLOSIVES MAGAZINE.

The Government Explosives Magazine was transferred in 1942 from its old habitat at Welikade to spacious and more up-to-date quarters consisting of 23 self-contained units built in accordance with Magazine Regulations. Privately-owned explosives are stored in the Magazine on payment of a nominal rent. Mr. R. S. Thambyrajah who was the Magazine Keeper from July 1, 1925, retired with effect from July 19, 1946. He has been succeeded by Mr. Walwin Perera.

AMALGAMATION OF THE GOVERNMENT STORES AND THE RAILWAY STORES DEPARTMENTS.

For administrative purposes, the Government Stores and the Railway Stores Departments were amalgamated with effect from June 1, 1942. Under the scheme of amalgamation, the administrative staff of the combined Department is as follows:—

SUPERINTENDENT OF STORES.



The Government Stores Department does its own accounting while the accounts of the Railway Stores are attended to by a branch of the Chief Accountant's Department of the Railway, housed at the Railway Stores office and under the supervision of the Deputy Superintendent of Stores for purposes of discipline.

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF.

In view of the heavy demands on my time, which was largely occupied with organizing and running the Department of Stores and Supplies, Mr. E. V. Frank, the Deputy Superintendent of Stores, was placed in charge of the combined Government Stores-Railway Stores Department, while I continued to exercise supervisory control of the Department and also to retain my functions as the permanent member of the Tender Board. With the cessation of the hostilities and reduction of work in the Department of Stores and Supplies, Mr. Frank reverted to his normal duties of being in charge of the Railway Stores. Mr. L. A. Wijesinghe has since been promoted to the post of Deputy Superintendent of Stores in succession to Mr. E. V. Frank, who retired with effect from January 29, 1948, having completed the age of 55 years. The following new posts were added to the cadre of the Government Stores Department in 1946:—

- 1 Additional Deputy Superintendent of Stores (Temporary—for Emergency Services).
- 1 Accountant.
- 3 Probationary Assistant Superintendents of Stores.

PROBATIONARY ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENTS OF STORES.

The Probationary Assistant Superintendents of Stores receive a wide training in general office routine, stores accounts, stores work involving the purchase of stores, the preparation of indents and contracts, and a practical knowledge of the very

wide range of articles in general use in Government Departments and imported from all parts of the World. The training given both at the Government Stores and at the Railway Stores Departments should equip these officers for carrying out efficiently the duties of Assistant Superintendents of Stores. It is mentioned here for the consideration of Government that the policy of appointing Probationary Assistant Superintendents of Stores is a wise one and should be continued as the training which these officers receive and the experience they gain is bound to prove invaluable to other Government Departments which can absorb these officers on completion of their period of training, in the event of there being no vacancies in the combined Government Stores-Railway Stores Departments at the time.

ACCOUNTS.

Owing to War-time conditions, Lend-Lease accounting, delay in the receipt of debits, the abnormal increase of work and the inadequacy of trained staff, the accounts of the Department have been somewhat in arrears. With the appointment of an Accountant in 1946, every effort is being made to bring the work up-to-date.

GENERAL STAFF.

During the period under review, the Department lost the services of several experienced officers by promotion, transfer, or retirement. Several vacancies were filled by the appointment of temporary clerks. The inadequacy of experienced staff is continuing to present difficulty, especially in view of the great deal of additional work which the Department is called upon to undertake from time to time with the expansion of Government activities.

WELFARE.

This Department has a Recreation Club, a Library, and a Refreshment Room. Recently the Refreshment Room was extended so as to afford the staff more accommodation and improved facilities. The management of the Refreshment Room is vested in a committee of the Recreation Club.

TURNOVER AND COST OF ESTABLISHMENT.

The annual turnover rose from Rs. 9,630,990 in 1938-39 to Rs. 30,115,792 in 1946-47, the increase being due partly to the increased cost of materials but very largely to the abnormal increase in the quantity of stores handled. The cost of Establishment worked out at 2.61 per cent. in 1938-39 as against 2.33 per cent. in 1946-47 showing a decrease of .28 per cent.

NEW QUARTERS FOR THE GOVERNMENT STORES DEPARTMENT.

The growing need for new quarters for the Government Stores Department, the activities of which have expanded very considerably in recent years, has been repeatedly stressed by my predecessor since 1920 and later by me. Although plans were prepared and a complete scheme was drawn up a few years ago to transfer the Government Stores Department to new buildings erected on the land adjacent to the present Railway Stores buildings, these were not proceeded with owing to the outbreak of War. This scheme, which was approved by Government, has been interfered with owing to the occupation by the Marketing Department and Food Supplies Department respectively of two of the buildings which this Department were to take over. It is hoped that these Departments will be able to relinquish these buildings in the near future. Provision for new quarters for the Government Stores Department appears in the Post-War Development Proposals of the Government of Ceylon but in view of the delay that would ensue in giving effect to these proposals, I have arranged to transfer the bulk of the Department to Lockside Stores, Lower McCallum road. This would not merely relieve the congestion at the main store at Fort but would also afford the staff a healthier and more congenial place of work.

GENERAL.

Transport.—During the period of the War, the Department was considerably handicapped by the inadequacy of transport. Consequent on the demands made by the Services, the Food Department and the Public, the Railway were not in a position to place a sufficient number of waggons at the disposal of this Department, nor was sufficient space available in the Goods Sheds to take in the large number of packages which were ready for despatch daily. This resulted in congestion at the Warehouse and Despatch Sections and consequent delay in the execution of requisitions received from Government Departments in outstations, several of whom had to be called upon to make their own transport arrangements. Contact was also made with the Railway authorities and a higher priority for waggons was thus secured, without which it would have been impossible to despatch the very large quantities of Medical Supplies, Textiles, Furniture, Agricultural Implements, Stationery, and General Stores indented for by the various Departments. At the time of writing the transport problem has considerably eased.

Handling of Government Cargo.—This work too continued to present much difficulty. In the past all Government cargo were landed at Chalmers Quay by the Government Landing Contractors who delivered such cargo at their points of destination in Colombo or in the case of outstation Departments at the Railway Goods Sheds in accordance with instructions issued to them. Since the introduction of Port Control, the landing of all cargo consigned to Ceylon has been and is continuing to be allocated by the Port Controller, at his discretion, to the various Landing Companies, so much so that the practice of Government cargo being landed and delivered by a single company ceased to operate. The result was that Government cargo which used to be landed in one place prior to the introduction of Port Control began to be landed in warehouses scattered over a wide area in the Customs premises which had to be visited daily for the purpose of locating Government cargo, obtaining particulars thereof and issuing the necessary instructions to the Delivery Contractors. To meet the situation a staff of temporary Wharf clerks was engaged.

Shortage of Materials.—Although the supply position showed some signs of improvement since the cessation of hostilities, a large variety of items such as Iron and Steel, Machinery and Machine Tools, Typewriters, certain class of cotton goods, Fuel, &c., are still in short supply. This Department which has always been fully alive to the situation lost no time in exploring every possible source of supply and in availing itself of every opportunity that presented itself of securing essential stores. The following are but a few typical examples of the action taken :—

(a) *Paper.*—The allocation made by the U. K. authorities for the requirements of the Ceylon Government was barely sufficient to meet the normal requirements of Government Departments not to speak of the very large quantities needed by the War-time Departments of Civil Defence, Food Control and Distribution, Petrol Control, Textile Control, Price Control, Internal Purchase, Agricultural Marketing, Food Production, Co-operative Development, &c. The Department took early steps to present to the Secretary of State a strong case for an increased allocation of paper from the U. K. Supplies of paper consigned to Far Eastern Territories which had passed into enemy occupation were requisitioned for Government requirements. A large quantity of paper was purchased from Service stocks in 1946. Circulars were also issued to Government Departments indicating the lines on which economy in the use of paper could be exercised, such as reduction in the size of form, re-arrangement or revision of Printed matter, &c. These steps helped to relieve the situation considerably.

(b) *Typewriters and Office Equipment.*—The Department was fortunate in securing at economic prices a supply of 318 typewriters and a quantity of office equipment from the stocks of U. S. Army stores purchased by the Ceylon Government.

(c) *Textiles*.—Contracts were entered into for the following :—

Hospital Checked cloths,
Grey Calico 43 in. and 72 in. wide,
Longcloth,
Cotton Drill,
Towels, face and bath,
Bed Ticking for Mattresses,
Galatea cloth for nurses.

A supply of 100,000 yards of Khaki drill to meet the demands of Government Departments was also purchased from the British Stores Disposals Board in addition to small purchases made from time to time in the local market. Indents were also placed on the Crown Agents for adequate supplies outside the cotton piece-goods quota for Ceylon, to meet the requirements of Hospitals and other Government Institutions.

(d) *Furniture*.—The establishment of Rural Hospitals, Maternity Homes, New Departments, Central Schools, Ceylon House in London, &c., resulted in very heavy demands for furniture. The fullest use was made of the Government Industrial Institutions but the entire output of these Institutions fell so far short of the demand that large supplies had to be purchased in the local market. The closure of certain War-time Departments helped to relieve the situation to some extent. All available furniture and equipment were transferred from these Departments to other Government Departments which were in urgent need of them.

(e) *Metals*.—Iron and Steel are in very short supply. Full advantage was taken of the release of Surplus Service stores to replenish stocks. Large supplies were also ordered under the Bulk Purchase arrangement.

(f) *General Stores*.—A large variety of items of general stores were and are still in short supply. The limited stocks which the Department succeeded in procuring from time to time were rationed out in order that every Department may have an equitable quota according to its needs.

These are but a few typical cases but there are a very large number of other items, to mention which would make this Report unduly long. The few instances mentioned would serve to throw some light on the general position and the problems which the Department has had to tackle.

STATISTICS.

I regret that the statistics, which formed a feature of the Administration Reports of previous years, are not yet available for inclusion in this Report. The Department has been working under very great pressure and has been concerned mainly with keeping abreast of the work relating to the purchase and supply of stores and their proper accounting, with the result that it could not spare the time to collect the necessary data for the preparation of statistics. This work is receiving attention and the omission will be rectified in the Report for 1948.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion I wish to place on record my warmest thanks to the administrative staff, the clerical staff and other similar grades and all minor employees for the hard and conscientious work performed by them during the War years and up to date. In spite of the many handicaps such as shortage of materials, delay in the arrival of supplies ordered from abroad, increased Government demands, transport difficulties, &c., the Department has been able to function efficiently and to meet not only the essential requirements of all Government Departments, but also the sudden demands made on it from time to time for contingencies arising from the sudden outbreak of epidemics in certain parts of the Island, occurrence of floods, &c. It redounds much to the credit of all concerned that the Department has been able to do so under very trying and difficult conditions.

Government Stores Department,
Colombo, June 1, 1948.

J. W. WARBY,
Superintendent of Stores.