

On the Indian side the concern of the fighting man has been the welfare of his family. As the economic situation in India deteriorated and the cost of living rose, the allotments made by serving Indians to their families began to lose their value. At the same time the rise in prices made the cultivator comparatively affluent by comparison with the fighting man. The problem which arose as a result of these conditions was under consideration at the close of the period, and revised rates of pay and allowances were subsequently announced for the Indian soldier.

As regards the personal welfare of the serving Indian, this presents perhaps a lesser problem in that the conditions of life were mainly those to which he is to a great extent accustomed. He benefited, however, in due proportion in the allotment of funds and in the amenities provided in war areas. The welfare of the Indian fighting man will present an ever-growing problem as he becomes accustomed to a higher standard of living.

58. *Welfare in the Air Forces.*

The welfare of Air Force personnel was organised separately, and presented many difficulties in view of the dispersion of detachments and their location in so many inaccessible places. The problem, however, was energetically tackled, and much was done to improve the lot of officers and men. In this work the R.A.F. chaplains of the various denominations gave much assistance, and toured their enormous parishes indefatigably.

In one direction the Air Forces had a great advantage over the other services, and that was in having its own postal service. This more than any other item had a beneficial effect on morale. It dealt with all R.A.F. mails, official and private, inland and foreign, and handled upwards of a million items weekly.

By comparison, the postal communications with the United Kingdom available to the other services, particularly the restricted issue of air letter cards, were a continual source of complaint. Some improvement was made later.

59. *The Canteen Services.*

Apart from the service that they render in areas where actual operations are in progress, the canteens now fill a vital need for military personnel all over the country.

The N.A.A.F.I. does not function in the India Command and the whole weight of the burden has fallen on the Canteen Services (India). This body has built up an organisation to undertake the importation into or purchase, and even in some cases the manufacture in India, of the commodities required. They have also organised storage accommodation, and they carry out the retail work to the troops through the medium of Indian contractors.

Previous Despatches have not so far referred to the work of the canteens. Indeed, it was not till the period now under report that for the reasons indicated above, their activities began to bulk largely. The following review is therefore opportune, and gives some indication of what has been achieved.

In order to appreciate the activities and expansion of the canteens, it is necessary to trace their progress from the inception of the Canteen Services (India) in July, 1942.

Prior to this there was a small body known as the Canteen Contractors Syndicate, who, working under the Q.M.G., organised an approved number of contractors to serve units and formations. The syndicate also had a small organisation for importing commodities which were otherwise unobtainable; or where to import them was profitable by comparison with purchasing in the country. This was, however, only on a limited scale sufficient for the needs of British Troops and Airmen in India at that time.

The following figures give some idea of the expansion that has been necessary:—

The sales for August, 1942 [the first month of working by the Canteen Services (India)], were Rs. 1,421,696. For June, 1943, they were Rs. 7,100,000, and for November, 1943, at the end of the period of this Despatch, they mounted to Rs. 11,500,000 or about £800,000.

Similarly in regard to warehouses. When the Canteen Services (India) came into existence, there were wholesale warehouses at five large centres including the chief ports. By November, 1943, double this number had been established.

Moreover great development occurred in subsidiary organisations under the Canteen Services (India), and the following came into being during the same period, none of which existed when the Canteen Services (India) were started:—

Canteen Services Personnel

Depot, Baroda	1
Base Canteen Depots	4
Advance Base Canteen Depots	7
Canteen Bulk Issue Depots ...	38
Independent Retail Shops ...	78
Transshipment Sections ...	3
Mobile Canteens	17
Tea and Supper Bars	40
Mineral Water Sections ...	20

It was decided, in agreement with the Secretary of State for India, that the Canteen Services (India) should place its orders direct on all sources of supply with the exception of North America. Indents on the latter would be sent to the Secretary of State for India, who would arrange to procure the supplies required.

As this arrangement was, however, not found wholly satisfactory, an officer representative of the Canteen Services (India) was sent to join the India Supply Mission at Washington, and thereafter indents were sent direct to that body. The latter procured the goods, keeping in touch with the Secretary of State for India, and (in the case of Lease-Lend articles) with the British Ministry of Food also. This system has been working smoothly.

As regards the manufacturing enterprise that has been undertaken by the Canteen Services (India), the following goods have been produced from a factory organised in India:—

Mango Chutney, Cornflour, Custard Powder, Flavouring Essences, Jelly Crystals, Black and White Pepper, Squashes and Cordials, Minolene, Egg Substitute, and Baking Powder.

In addition efforts have been made to augment the supply of alcoholic beverages by indigenous