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REVISION OF RETIRING AGE FOR OFFICERS

"The success of an army depends more than anything else upon the quality of its officers. A continuous effort must therefore be made not merely to maintain, but steadily to raise, the standard of efficiency and leadership among all ranks of officers".

So begins an Army Council Instruction which has just been issued to all Commands, ordering a general review of the military efficiency and alertness of officers at home and abroad, to ensure that they possess the qualities essential for the strain and speed of present day warfare.

The instruction proceeds:- "All who hold positions of authority and responsibility must possess an adequate degree of physical fitness, energy and mental alertness as well as purely military efficiency. Officers of the field force, who are responsible for men's lives and on whom the increased strain and speed of modern warfare bears heavily must possess an especially high degree of all-round fitness.

It has become evident that there are now a number of officers who, for a variety of reasons (such as advancing age, physical or mental slowness, lack of determination or drive, overstrain, or unadaptability of temperament or character), are not able with full success to discharge their present duties. It is only fair to them personally, to the Army as a whole, and to the cause for which we are fighting, that these officers should be replaced without delay by others better suited to perform these duties."

The increase in the number of younger officers and the progress of their training now make this step possible.

A report has therefore been called for on all officers up to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, irrespective of the type of their commission, who reached the age of 45 or over on 31st December, 1941.

The reports are to be prepared with no other consideration than that of the officers' ability to perform their duties in war as it is today, and will not be regarded as "adverse" in the sense of the term as used in military reports. Recommendations will fall into one of three categories:

1. Recommended for retention in present unit or appointment.
2. Recommended for a less active unit or other employment.
3. Not recommended for further employment.

Those officers who are recommended for alternative military employment will continue their duties until further orders are issued. In certain cases it may prove impossible to find suitable military employment for such officers, and in that case it may be necessary to relegate them to unemployment.

/officers

Officers who are not recommended for further military employment will be informed of the reasons. They have the normal right of appeal to the Army Council if they desire to exercise it.

Officers recommended for relegation to unemployment will be granted forty-two days notice-leave on the full pay of their substantive or war substantive rank. The leave should begin on the day after they are informed but may be delayed for not more than two days to enable them to hand over duties.

At the end of their notice-leave serving Regular officers will be retired, but if within the prescribed age limits will be liable to recall; retired Regular officers will revert to unemployment; Territorial officers will be disembodied; officers of the Supplementary Reserve will be relegated to the Regular Army Reserve of Officers; officers of the Regular Army Reserve of Officers and the Territorial Army Reserve of Officers will be relegated to their appropriate reserves; and officers holding emergency commissions will be relegated to unemployment with the option of relinquishing their commissions if they so desire.

Officers who are relegated to a reserve or are disembodied may take up civil employment, and, while no guarantee can be given that they will not be recalled if the need is imperative, every endeavour will be made not to recall them. Other officers relegated to unemployment will not be recalled without their consent. Officers in Reserves, in the Territorial Army, or on the unemployed list, who have not resigned their commissions, are excluded from the operations of the National Service Acts.

It is an essential feature of the scheme that every effort will be made to help officers relegated to unemployment in obtaining civil employment.

WAR OFFICE