

182. *Mr. Salmond.*] You are responsible for the equipment of the troops that come into camp, and for their feeding?—Yes, for the food after it is issued by the Supply Officer.

183. As to the equipment, has the clothing always been sufficient in quantity, excepting the boots?—Otherwise than as regards the boots, yes.

184. Absolutely sufficient?—Yes.

185. Is it satisfactory in quality? What about the boots?—The boots now are satisfactory.

186. Were they not so before?—In the early stages of the camp, no.

187. What was wrong with them?—The boot in material was all right, but it was faulty in construction. The inside lining, for instance, used to come down, or curl up under the men's toes and cause sore feet. It was badly constructed.

188. Were they reasonably watertight?—Reasonably watertight, yes.

189. Was a change afterwards made in the construction of the boot?—Yes. The boot was made wider and more like military boots—wider in the toe, and the instep was made larger, and the boot was generally constructed better than before.

190. Who had charge of that department?—The Stores Department.

191. Did you complain of the quality of the boots?—Yes, I think I did.

192. Were complaints made to you by the men?—Yes; and the boot was altered.

193. On what date was that?—I do not remember the date—some time during the month of November, it would be; in connection with the First Reinforcements.

194. The First Reinforcements got the defective boots?—Yes.

195. And all the others since got the new class of boots?—Yes, they are much better.

196. As to the uniforms, was there anything wrong with them?—Well, in several respects the uniforms have not been built as they should have been. For instance, there were uniforms 35 in. in the chest and 18 in. in the collar: that is like putting a draught horse's collar on a Shetland pony.

197. *The Chairman.*] It was not made proportionately?—That is so.

198. *Mr. Salmond.*] Whose fault would that be?—The maker's.

199. Were any of the uniforms returned?—Yes, sir.

200. In large numbers?—I had 500 returned from the Trentham Regiment. The trousers were splendid and of good material, but the jackets were badly cut and badly finished. Uniforms were passed which could not be issued: a man would find, for instance, that the lining in the sleeve was sewn across so that he could not get his arm through.

201. Did I understand you to say that 500 uniforms issued from the Stores Department were returned?—They were returned to me from the officer commanding the Trentham Regiment because the top part of the coat and the collar were badly cut. I sent them back to the store. The trousers were good and there was no necessity to return them, but they were returned to me because the officer commanding the regiment wanted the jacket and trousers of the same make.

202. Did he get them?—The majority of those uniforms came back and were reissued to the unit.

203. Was the material in every case right?—There was a variety of materials. Yes, they were all right. The only big complaint was as regards the riding-breeches, which did not wear as they should: that is to say, one did not get the life out of them that you would expect.

204. Was the underclothing supplied good in quality?—Yes.

205. No complaint about that?—That is so.

206. Blankets and bedding, were they all right?—It was only one portion of the bedding that we issued—the blankets, and, of course, the straw.

207. What about the mattresses?—They were never issued until recently. Only last Wednesday evening I received a wire instructing me that the free issue of mattresses was authorized.

208. *The Chairman.*] For the huts?—For putting the straw into and sleeping on.

209. Then in the tents and huts there were no mattresses?—Yes, there were, but only what the men procured themselves; none were issued by us.

210. You supplied the straw and the men provided the covering?—Yes.

211. *Mr. Salmond.*] So that unless the men bought the coverings they would have to sleep on the boarded floors of the tents with straw supplied by you?—Yes.

212. Were mattresses freely bought?—Yes, 99 per cent. of the men had them.

213. What did they cost?—From 1s. 9d. to 2s. retail.

214. Is it usual to provide the men with straw to sleep on and expect them to provide the mattresses?—In camps, yes.

215. In permanent camps like this one?—Mattresses have never been issued that I know of at the regular camps here.

216. But what is the longest time that the soldiers were in those camps?—During the last ten years in New Zealand, I think about fourteen days.

217. But these men are in camp for four months?—Yes, and some of them longer.

218. Would it not be a reasonable thing to supply them with bedding complete as well as blankets?—Yes, quite reasonable.

219. *The Chairman.*] The point is that there was an alteration made in the rule, and that the men need not now pay for these mattresses themselves?—That is so; we issue them.

220. When a new draft of troops came into camp they were supplied with blankets, and did you also give them a bundle of straw each?—No; they get 80 lb. of straw for eight men in one tent. Each man takes his bundle of straw and makes his bed with it.

221. *Mr. Salmond.*] Now, as to the food supplied, has it in your opinion always been sufficient in quantity?—Yes.

222. And in quality?—Yes.