

14. It may cost more?—Yes; but why consider the cost? If I am buying belly at present it costs me 1s. 1d. a pound, and if I buy shoulder it costs about 1s. 3d.

15. My question was asked so that I might be able to appreciate the difference between the two?—Yes. If the shoulder leather is used, with some Stockholm tar, it would be better.

16. *Mr. Skerrett.*] The specification provided for shoulder, but as a matter of fact belly leather is being used?—That may be so. The men are not used to a boot like this.

17. *The Chairman.*] There is an Army boot like this. The only difference, I understand, is that we put more nails in the sole than they do in the Imperial Army boot. We had them exhibited by the camp officials?—There seem to be two patterns of the Army boot—some of them are weltsed.

18. The contractors simply had to make them according to specification: you have not seen them alongside the Army boot?—The sample of the Army boot I have seen has a dry-ped sole. I was going to submit to you the difference in sole-leather. I find that the sole-leather in this boot is very soft. I know that sole-leather at the present time is very hard to get, but there is such a thing coming into New Zealand as “Canadian bends,” and that leather is about as good as there is here.

19. I do not know that we can go into the merits of these different leathers, but the other points that you have given us are, I think, quite valuable?—I think it is important that these leathers should be gone into, because our boys should have the very best. It is not right for them to have bad sole-leather when we can give them better.

20. You think “Canadian bends” might be used where the ordinary sole-leather cannot be got?—They are using a more inferior leather. I have here samples of the various leathers. [Samples put in.] There is one more statement I would like to make, in regard to the attachment of these soles. They are being standard-screwed on—a wire screw is put through the middle of the slip sole. The outside sole is stitched by the machines. That boot would be a far more durable boot if it were standard-screwed right through. I do not know why the stitching is put there at all.

21. It would seem desirable to have a committee of bootmakers to deal with this matter?—I would like to meet them. I have been trying to get an alteration made in this boot ever since last October. I have tried to interest many public men in Wellington. I have tried the Mayor of Wellington, but I never could get any satisfaction, so when I saw the advertisement of this Commission I got into touch with Mr. Skerrett.

*Mr. Skerrett:* I have called this evidence with a view to inviting this Commission to criticize the details of this boot in order to suggest the following lines of inquiry: (1.) What expert opinion did the Defence Department adopt before determining the character and specification of the service boot? (2.) What expert opinion and advice did they obtain as to the sizes which were to be available, and as to the capacity of the leather employed to resist saturation, and, if so, what tests, if any, were applied? (3.) What was the extent and character of the inspection of the boots delivered by the contractors in pursuance of their contract?

22. *Mr. Gray.*] Do you know who were the manufacturers of the boots which you repaired?—No, I cannot say that—the brand was worn off.

23. How many boots did you say you saw which were, in your opinion, defective?—Take the belly leather, for instance: I suppose I have repaired dozens, and they were all the same.

24. They all had belly leather?—Yes.

25. Do you know that shoulder leather is specified?—That may be so.

26. Do you know that it is so?—I do not know, as a fact.

27. Do you suggest waxed kip should be used instead of tanned chrome?—Yes.

28. Can waxed kip be got in New Zealand now?—I do not see why it should not be. The farm hands have waxed kip for their boots. Besides, if it is not to be obtained now it could have been.

29. You have not heard of any difficulty in getting it?—No, I have never had any difficulty in getting it.

30. You suggest that if the boots were made with waxed kip and with proper sole-leather they would not be so porous as those you have repaired?—That is so.

31. But you admit that the men themselves could take greater precautions if they put on dry pairs of socks?—That is so; but they are only supplied with two pairs of socks by the Defence Department. They are bound down to two pairs of socks.

32. *The Chairman.*] We have been told that that is not so: they get presents of socks in camp?—I have a friend in camp and—

33. Is he in camp?—Yes; I was only talking to him last night, and he said that he had two pairs issued to him, and the others he had he had bought himself.

34. Every man has two pairs given him, but he can have as many more as he likes to buy?—Yes, providing he pays for them himself.

35. Your friend puts on a dry pair?—Yes, he has not taken cold.

36. And what he has done others could have done?—Yes; but he also broke the rule by having a drop of whisky.

37. *Mr. Salmond.*] Your first complaint was that the boots were not waterproof?—That is so.

38. Is not chrome softer than kip?—Yes, to the feel.

39. But more comfortable?—No.

40. So that the chrome is not any more comfortable than the other?—Not a bit.

41. But softer?—To feel when it is new perhaps. Unless they are well greased, when they are continually getting wet and dry, wet and dry, wet and dry, they become very hard—chrome boots.

42. Could not a chrome boot be made perfectly watertight by greasing it?—Yes.