

27. Are any proposed to be taken?—Naturally we will have to do so.

28. When did you first hear of the supposition?—I heard of it from Mr. Sewell. On the 31st May he explained that he thought there were sufficient blankets out at Trentham for the men in camp, with what he had sent out about the 24th May; adding those to his previous totals he considered the supply sufficient.

29. He says that there would be approximately 8,561 out there. Is there no return made from time to time and got from the camp as to what supply they have in hand?—We have not had a written return for some time.

30. Is there any check or audit of the supplies at the camp?—Not that I know of.

31. Do you think that a periodical audit would be desirable, so as to reconcile the output from the stores with what they have in hand?—It would be.

32. With regard to the boots, we have heard that the position was that when the requisition for the extra boots—4,000 pairs—was sent in, you had not enough in hand and they could not be got?—At that time.

33. Is that a correct statement of the position?—Yes; there were not sufficient of the sizes required in store.

34. On the subject of making good the call for boots, what steps did you take?—There were two contractors supplying the Department under public tender, and as they could not supply all that we required at the time we obtained further supplies from some four or five other firms.

35. And have you been able to keep up the supplies to the present satisfactorily or not?—Yes, we are now practically keeping up with all demands.

36. According to Captain McCristell's return for blankets, he puts the blankets in hand on the 27th May as 3,956, and the balance of requisition short-delivered on the 27th May was 2,760. He required 6,000 on arrival. Will you take a note of those figures and test them. I will hand you this return, and you can take some notes from it yourself, and you can explain anything later?—May I be allowed to quote Captain McCristell's requisition of the 22nd May, received by me on the 24th May. The order No. 516 was written out for Mr. Sewell, in charge of blankets, to supply 6,000 blankets.

37. There was another order for 1,000 blankets on the 4th May?—On the 5th May an order was written for Mr. Sewell to supply 1,000 blankets besides other items.

38. I see that the new Trentham Regiment was notified on the 19th April: you get a notification of future requirements, do you not?—Yes.

39. Then it was notified on the 19th April that this 2,200 men were going into camp: you might say why there was no requisition until the 22nd May?—That is the Camp Quartermaster's duty.

40. But did you not act upon the notification and get ready?—Yes, we get ready, but he perhaps may not be able to take the goods until a certain date. At that time, I think, they were enlarging their store.

41. It may be that there is nothing in this supposition on the part of the storeman that they were oversupplied with blankets, but you now have the information, and you might check the figures?—Yes, I can check it from our ledgers, and we have all the requisitions from the Quartermaster. We can see whether they agree.

42. And you can see whether they tally. Certain blankets were destroyed, though?—Yes; but they would be written off. His ledger would show his issue to every man and the receipts from the Defence Stores.

43. We were told that there should be 4,000-odd blankets at Trentham at the present time, and the surplus sent out, of 1,809 blankets: is this one of the matters that are the subject of another inquiry at the present time?—No, I do not think it is being touched upon.

44. *Mr. Ferguson.*] Mr. Sewell distinctly stated that in the week prior to this requisition coming in he had gone to you and explained to you that they had quite sufficient blankets out there, which he knew as the result of his observations when visiting the camp, and thereupon you authorized him to short-supply the requisition?—No, that is not correct.

45. We went on to examine him as to whether in other cases the Stores Department had neglected to supply requisitions in full. Is it a fact that the Stores Department neglected to complete requisitions, and sent supplies by their own knowledge and judgment?—It is not a fact.

46. *Mr. Gray.*] The practice is that if the Quartermaster wants a supply of clothing or other things he sends in a requisition on that pink form: who receives the requisitions when they come in from the Quartermaster?—Mr. Hopkinson.

47. Then what have you to do with it?—He generally passes it to me to look through, and if the Stores Department requires to make purchases to complete the requisition we decide as to how we will obtain the goods. If we have sufficient time we would call for quotations, but if the goods are required immediately we procure them to the best advantage.

48. You remember this requisition coming in from Trentham on the 24th May for 6,000 blankets?—Yes.

49. There were enough blankets in stock to supply the requisition?—I would not swear that there were enough on the 24th May, but they were coming in daily from the contractors.

50. The requisition is passed on to Mr. Hopkinson?—Yes.

51. Have you any recollection of being told about the 29th May that there was already a sufficient supply of blankets at the camp, or that there were not as many as 6,000 required?—I have no recollection of that.

52. When did you first hear that the total quantity of 6,000 blankets had not been sent out?—About 10.30 a.m. on Sunday, the 30th May. I was working in the office then.

53. Did you receive a message from the camp that they would require a further supply of 5,000 blankets?—Yes.