

NOTE

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Canadian Section, G.H.Q., 2nd Echelon.

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Ottawa, CANADA.

1. A further report is submitted. This report deals with the establishment known as the Canadian Section, G.H.Q., 2nd Echelon, now located at FARNHAM (Surrey).
2. In company with Major W.B. WEDD (A.G. 1, C.M.H.Q.) I visited Farnham on 5 March. I was taken through the 2nd Echelon's offices and its organization was explained to me.

BRIEF SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF
THE CANADIAN 2ND ECHELON

3. The duties of the 2nd Echelon (D.A.G.'s office at the base) are explained in Field Service Regulations, Vol. 1 (ed. 1930, reprint of 1939), pp. 46-7, and Appendix III. It is, in effect, a Record Office for the immediate purposes of the army in the field, charged with recording the essential facts concerning all military personnel in the theatre of operations. Its most important single function, probably, is the provision of reinforcements for units in the field, "by the submission of demands to the home authorities." Such units ordinarily provide an orderly-room sergeant for attachment to the 2nd Echelon, and the Echelon, on the basis of information supplied to it regularly on forms provided for the purpose, prepares and issues the units' Part II Orders. From an historical point of view, one of the most important functions of the Echelon is the collection and transmission of War Diaries.
4. The Canadian Section, General Headquarters, 2nd Echelon, was named as a Corps of the Active Militia and placed on active service by General Order No. 1 of 22 Jan. 1940. A War Establishment for the Section was authorized by G.O. 101 of 13 June 1940. The serial number allotted to it by the former G.O. was 149.
5. Major (until recently Captain) H.M. JACKSON, of the Records Office at ACTON (see my Report No. 6), who was one of the original officers of the Canadian Section, has given me the following facts. The Section was organized early in December, 1939, the date of Major JACKSON'S own appointment to the C.A.S.F. being 6 Dec. The personnel of the Section came to the United Kingdom with the Second Flight and were the first troops of the flight to land, coming ashore on 30 Dec., 1939. I gather from Major Jackson that the majority of the flight did not disembark until 31 Dec. Lt.-Col. A.M. BROWN, the O. i/c Records, came to England at the same time to establish the

Records Office, though he was without personnel for the purpose. The consequence was that the 2nd Echelon personnel were utilized for it, and they may be said to have conducted the Records Office, under Lt.-Col. Brown's direction, during its first few months. In February, 1940, the prompt despatch from Canada of a nucleus of Records personnel was requested (see C.M.H.Q. fyle 6/2 Ech/1, enclo. 14 A) and Major Jackson tells me they arrived at ACTON in April.

6. At the beginning of 1940 it was anticipated that the First Canadian Division would move to France in the spring to operate with the British Expeditionary Force, and the organization and disposition of the Canadian Section, G.H.Q., 2nd Echelon, became in these circumstances a matter of discussion. The development of the question may be traced in C.M.H.Q. fyle 6/2 Ech/1. The matter was complicated by the fact that at the end of 1939 (by General Lord GORT's General Routine Order No. 392, 25 Dec.) the British 2nd Echelon had been divided: the reinforcement section, working on daily casualty returns, remained in France, but the remaining sections, dealing with Part II Orders, weekly casualty returns, etc., returned to England and were established at MARGATE, though they were still under G.H.Q. and not the War Office.

7. In February, 1940, Canadian Military Headquarters suggested that the Canadian Section should be set up at MARGATE alongside the British organization. National Defence Headquarters concurred in this, but urged combining the Records Office and the Canadian Section and establishing the whole at MARGATE. C.M.H.Q. pointed out numerous objections to this proposal (among others, the fact that the 2nd Echelon had to be mobile while Records was essentially immobile, the relative insecurity of Margate from the point of view of the safety of records, and the inconvenience for C.M.H.Q. itself of the Records Office being removed from the London area). On 4 April, 1940, after further consideration, C.M.H.Q. recommended that a small reinforcement section should be sent to operate with the similar British section in France, the rest of the personnel (including those attached from field units for Part II Orders purposes) being kept at ACTON, with only a very small liaison detachment at MARGATE. The 2nd Echelon personnel at ACTON would be kept separate from those of the Records Office, as it still seemed probable that the whole Section would ultimately have to be set up abroad. The final decision, Major Jackson tells me, was that the Reinforcement, Casualty and War Diary sections of the Canadian Echelon would go to France, while the Record Section (Part II Orders) and the Pay and Discipline Section would remain at Acton. However, Major M.S. DUNN (THE STORMONT, DUNDAS AND GLENGARRY HIGHLANDERS) now of "A" Branch, C.M.H.Q., but formerly of the 2nd Echelon, tells me that up to the time of the British withdrawal from France the possibility of the whole Echelon going abroad was still a subject of consideration, though evidently this was not immediately contemplated.

8. When 1 Cdn Div. was ordered to France in June, 1940, arrangements were made to set up the Reinforcement and Casualty Sections of the Echelon in France forthwith. The Officer i/c 2nd Echelon, Major J.R. ROCHE (UNIVERSITE DE MONTRREAL CONTINGENT, C.I.O.T.C.) had previously made a reconnaissance in France with Major Dunn, and had chosen a position for the Echelon at PORNICHET. (The British Echelon was at ROUEN). Major Dunn now proceeded to France with an advanced party, reached PORNICHET and made all preparation for opening in the premises which had been obtained there. He spent, he tells me, about two days there before the collapse of the French armies and the impending withdrawal of the British forces remaining in the country made evacuation necessary. New arrangements now had to be made for

the Canadian Section, G.H.Q., 2nd Echelon, as for everything else at this juncture; and by 20 June it had been decided that the sections of it which had prepared to move to France were to be established at BORDON.

9. After the withdrawal of the British forces from the Continent, the 2nd Echelon which had served the B.E.F. was disbanded as unnecessary. (It may be noted in passing that the sections of it located in England had been moved from MARGATE to WESTON-SUPER-MARE on 27-28 May.) The Canadian military authorities, whose problems were not quite the same, decided to keep their Echelon in existence and to retain their units in the United Kingdom on a "field return basis". From this time the name "Canadian Section, G.H.Q., 2nd Echelon" became something of a misnomer, but it is still retained.

10. Early in September, 1940, the Echelon moved from BORDON to FARNHAM. On 6 Sept. Major ROCHE reported that it was now established in WILLMER HOUSE, 29 West Street, FARNHAM, and suggested that the Records (Part II Orders) and Discipline & Pay Sections, still at ACTON, be now moved thither. This was done on 12 Sept. The War Diaries Section remained at ACTON, and was now definitely separated from the 2nd Echelon and made a part of the organization of the Records Office.

11. The above paragraphs present only a very incomplete outline of a very complicated subject. It is felt, however, that this outline set down contemporaneously may perhaps assist a later compiler in finding his way through the documents, at a time when actual participants may not be at hand for consultation.

12. It may be worth while to mention that Major DUNN feels that on another occasion, in the event of Canadian forces leaving the United Kingdom for another theatre of war, the whole Echelon would probably go abroad without the long controversy that took place in 1940. He believes that the British authorities are not pleased with the results of the experiment of dividing their Echelon, and that in consequence the older practice will probably be reverted to.

PRESENT SITUATION OF THE CANADIAN 2ND ECHELON

12. The "Canadian Section, G.H.Q., 2nd Echelon", occupies two buildings on the main street of FARNHAM. The main building, in which Major ROCHE has his office, is a pleasant red-brick Georgian building (dated, I was told, 1718) with a garden attached. Major Roche's office is a charming panelled room with a view of the garden. The rooms, however, are a trifle small for the purposes for which they are being used.

13. On the day of my visit Major ROCHE was on leave, but Major WEBB and I met Capt. H.W. McMANUS (QUEEN'S YORK RANGERS), who is Camp Commandant, Capt. L.A. AITKEN (1st HUSSARS) and several other officers.

14. The strength of the organization at the time of my visit (5 Mar 40) was 113 all ranks, seven being officers. This figure includes 71 other ranks attached from field units to work on their Part II Orders. All the larger units are expected to send an M.C.O. or W.O. for this purpose. At the present time the Echelon is issuing Part II Orders for approximately 135 units.

15. The Echelon is organized in the following sections: Records (the form used at Farnham in describing this is Records Sections), dealing with unit Part II Orders; Reinforcement; Casualties and Effects; Discipline and Pay (Major Dunn points out that this, under present conditions, has little to do and exists mainly on paper); Statistical. An attempt is still made to keep the Echelon on a mobile basis: for example, its card-index system is arranged in groups of four drawers for purposes of easy transport.

16. A few war diaries are still being transmitted by their units to the Echelon, though they should under present conditions go direct to ACTON. Capt. AITKEN showed me the diary of the CARLETON AND VOHL REGIMENT, a very inadequate one indeed. However, as this diary was written by the commanding officer, and as the latter has now been promoted to a brigade command, the diary may now improve. Capt. AITKEN also showed me a diary which regularly arrives under one cover marked SECRET. This is the work of NO. 4 POSTAL UNIT (2 Cdn Div).

17. The officers of the Echelon whom I met gave the impression of being efficient and interested in their jobs.

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