

FROM: OFFICER-IN-CHARGE, R.C.N. SUB-DEPOT, H.M.C.S. "NIOBE"  
GREENOCK, SCOTLAND.

DATE: 12th OCTOBER, 1943.

TO: R.C.N. DEPOT, H.M.C.S. "STADACONA", HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA.  
(Copy to: Commanding Officer, H.M.C.S. "NIOBE").

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H.M.C.S. "SASKATCHEWAN" DRAFTING

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Reference your letter H-30-6-1 of 1st September, 1943.

1. In order to give a complete picture of the matter, it is intended to go into some detail as to the events leading up to the commissioning of H.M.C.S. "Saskatchewan" in so far as drafting is concerned.

To give some of the facts in detail, the following extract from R.C.N. Sub Depot, Niobe's report of May, 1943 para (3) is quoted:-

" 3. Drafts to River Class Destroyers recently (or in the process of being) taken over by the R.C.N. from the R.N.

(a) No. 1 River Class Destroyer draft arrived in "Niobe" on March 16th 1943 and was within the next two days drafted to H.M.S. "Griffin" (now re-commissioned H.M.C.S. "Ottawa"). On April 1st 1943 two drafts arrived earmarked on Draft Orders and Ocean Transport lists as: For No. 2 River Class Destroyer and For No. 3 River Class Destroyer. No. 2 draft was drafted to H.M.S. "Decoy" (now re-commissioned H.M.C.S. "Kootenay").

(b) It was assumed that No. 3 Draft was intended for the next of these destroyers to be commissioned, namely, H.M.S. "Fortune" (to be re-commissioned H.M.C.S. "Saskatchewan") and an advance party being requested by the proper R.N. Authorities, a draft of key ratings was made up out of the No. 3 River Class Destroyer Draft and sent to the ship which was in the process of refitting.

(c) The next of these destroyers to be commissioned was H.M.S. "Express" (to be re-commissioned H.M.C.S. "Gatineau"). Upon F.O.I.C. Tyne requesting an advance party for the ship a draft of key ratings was made up from the Manning Pool, H.M.C.S. "Niobe" and discharged to the ship.

(d) On May 11th 1943 a draft arrived in Niobe under charge of Lieutenant Webber, R.C.N. which was earmarked according to the Ocean Transport Lists for "Fortune" (no Draft Order accompanying), and Lieutenant Webber obtained the information that No. 3 River Class Destroyer Draft was sent as a spare destroyer crew for the Manning Pool. This was the first intimation the Sub-Depot had of this. As Lieutenant Webber desired to keep the main body of the crew which arrived with him, the No. 3 River Class Destroyer Draft were informed that they would not be drafted to the "Fortune" but would now constitute part of the Manning Pool. In a way, this change was unfortunate as most of them had taken the necessary refresher courses and had been as they thought waiting in "Niobe" for draft to the "Fortune" for over a month. The verbal statement of Lieutenant Webber however, seemed the only logical conclusion to arrive at. It was urged that he keep the advance party which had already been in the ship some weeks and upon joining the ship himself and being satisfied as



to the quality of the advance party, he agreed to do this with the exception of the coxswain who was exchanged as he desired to keep the coxswain who had come over with him earmarked for "Fortune".

There were now a number of ratings in the "Fortune" draft with the equivalent rates of those in the Advance Party and these were removed from the "Fortune" draft and informed that they would now become part of the Manning Pool, "Niobe", making up for the ratings who had been drafted from No. 3 River Class Destroyer Draft.

(e) On May 23rd 1943 a draft arrived in "Niobe" earmarked according to Ocean Transport Lists (no Draft Order accompanying) "for Express". In a similar manner to the "Fortune" the problem arose as to advance party which had been drafted to the "Express" some weeks previously from the Manning Pool, "Niobe". It was decided in conjunction with the 1st Lieutenant, Lieutenant Chadwick, R.C.N. of the "Express" ("Gatineau") to leave the advance party which had already been drafted and to take from the "Express Draft" the equivalent ratings. This was done and the key ratings in question from the "Express Draft" were notified of their change of status and that they were now part of the Manning Pool, H.M.C.S. "Niobe". These ratings filled the places of those who had been drafted from the original Manning Pool.

(f) As may be easily understood, these many changes led to a certain amount of confusion and misunderstanding by the ratings concerned, especially those who had of necessity to miss the drafts they anticipated. On the whole, however, it is felt the situation was dealt with in the most logical manner possible and what is more important, to the satisfaction of the respective officers of the ships concerned."

2. Reference H.M.C.S. "Saskatchewan's" letter to H.M.C.S. "Avalon" dated 22nd July.

The ratings referred have apparently deteriorated greatly in less than three months time as on or about the 10th June of this year when H.M.C.S. "Saskatchewan" docked at Great Harbour in the Clyde, the Drafting Officer visited the ship and was informed by both the Commanding Officer and the First Lieutenant that they were satisfied with the crew and desired no changes to be made. Previous to this during the absence of the Drafting Officer, the Assistant Drafting Officer at the time, Sub.Lieut. G.M. Orr, stated he was requested by the Executive Officer of the Saskatchewan to make certain changes. Sub.Lieut. Orr informed the Drafting Officer that he had asked that a letter be sent giving the reasons the changes were desired so that the information could be passed to the next ship to which the ratings in question would be drafted. No letter was received and on the visit to the ship by the Drafting Officer subsequently, the request was not repeated.

3. The following is a resume of the history as far as can be ascertained in each particular case of the ratings referred.

Storey, T. A/C.P.O. TC. V11326 *MS*

This rating arrived in "Niobe" with the Executive Officer appointed to the ship and the "Fortune" draft. The Torpedo Coxswain of No. 3 River Class Destroyer crew (spare Destroyer Crew) viz: M. Miller, P.O. (TC) 3090 had been drafted with the advance party to the ship, but at the request of her Executive Officer an exchange was made and Storey was sent as T.C. and accompanied the Executive Officer to the ship, leaving Niobe on May 5th 1943. No complaints have been received in this Sub-Depot with regard to this rating who was drafted, it will be noted, by the R.C.N. Depot specifically for the "Fortune". As far as is known, a Commanding



NATIONAL  
H.M.C.S. "EX  
FEARLESS CLASS  
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(If purpose for which referred and enter  
A. F.  
This rating was sent over for the spare Destroyer Crew, arriving in Niobe on March 21st 1943 and drafted to the ship as Advance Party on May 6th 1943. The Ship's Executive Officer was given the opportunity to exchange him for the Gunner's Mate sent specifically for "Fortune" but he definitely asked that he remain and that the Gunners Mate drafted with the "Fortune" crew be deleted. This request was complied with.

J. LAWSON, P.O.(O.M.) 2762. MT

This rating was sent over for the spare Destroyer Crew, arriving in Niobe on March 21st 1943 and drafted to the ship as Advance Party on May 6th 1943. The Ship's Executive Officer was given the opportunity to exchange him for the Gunner's Mate sent specifically for "Fortune" but he definitely asked that he remain and that the Gunners Mate drafted with the "Fortune" crew be deleted. This request was complied with.

J. WALSH, Shipt.3/cl. V26122 PB

This rating arrived in "Niobe" from "Stadacona" on January 24th 1942. His name was put forward by "Fortune" by signal on 12th May 1943 and he was drafted to her the following day in compliance with the request. His work during his time in "Niobe" was considered most satisfactory and the Engineer Officer here was very loath to have him drafted as he was acting as Chief Shipwright at the time.

J. RUSSELL, Ldg. Smn.(L.T.O.) 3217. MT

This rating was drafted to "Niobe" by R.C.N. Depot for "Fortune" and was discharged to her with the main body on 30th May 1943.

L. LYONS, P.O.Ck.(S) V17025. MB

Some of the cooks, stewards and supply assistants were not drafted to "Niobe" for this ship and were supplied from the "Niobe" Pool. This particular rating arrived in "Niobe" from "Stadacona" on November 13th 1941 and was drafted to the "Fortune" on 27th May 1943. His record at "Niobe" was excellent and it was during this period that he was advanced to P.O.Cook (S) to date from 1st November 1942.

L.C.TILLEY, S.A., V397. MB

This rating arrived in "Niobe" on May 11th from "Iroquois" and was drafted on May 12th to "Saskatchewan". There is probably good ground for complaint with regard to this rating, as he served time in cells in H.M.S. "Tyne" at Scapa Flow and was drafted off "Iroquois" at her request. In this case, it was decided to give him a trial in another ship. No request has been received, however, in this Sub-Depot from "Saskatchewan" asking for his removal or that he be exchanged.

P. BOYLE, Ldg.Sto. A4050. MB

This rating arrived in "Niobe" in the "Fortune" draft on 11th May and was drafted to that ship on 17th May. Very little is known in "Niobe" with regard to him.

W. B. LAHAY, E.R.A.4/cl. V37451. MB

This rating arrived in "Niobe" in "Fortune" draft on 11th May and was drafted to that ship on 30th May together with the main body.



H. HEMM, Ldg.Sto. V36068

The dates of arrival and departure to and from "Niobe" are co-incident in this rating's case with Lahay's. He was sent from Halifax earmarked "Fortune" and discharged almost directly to that ship.

J.W.CAMPBELL, Ldg.Smn. O.R.II, V18229

This rating arrived in "Niobe" on 8th March 1943 and joined main body on draft to "Fortune" on 30th May 1943. He replaced a rating who had taken sick. His record in "Niobe" as far as can be ascertained was very good.

4. Reference H.M.C.S. "Saskatchewan's" letter to F.O.N.F. dated 24th July, 1943.

Reference para. 1 of H.M.C.S. "Saskatchewan's" letter. As previously mentioned, the Advance Party referred to was made up out of the River Class 3 Draft (Spare Destroyer's Crew) which had only been in "Niobe" a very short time viz; from March 2nd 1943. The only exceptions to this were the cases of Accountant Branch ratings who were supplied from "Niobe" Manning Pool.

The statement that any of these ratings were informed by "Niobe" that they would be given leave directly "Saskatchewan" arrived at St. John's, is as far as can be ascertained here, a mis-statement. The Drafting Officer or his staff, made no such promise. All the officers now in "Niobe" who were here in May of this year, upon being asked concerning this statement, deny having made any such promise. It is hardly conceivable that anyone in authority would make such a promise, as it would be impossible of fulfilment. The statement that the ship was not informed of this promise is correct.

With regard to para.2, it is true that most of the important ratings referred to were deleted from the draft earmarked "Fortune". This was done as their counterparts had already been drafted to the ship as Advance Party and they became part of the spare Destroyer crew. This was not done in the case of the Accountant Branch personnel. As had been pointed out above, the Executive Officer of the "Saskatchewan" desired this arrangement, although he was definitely given the choice of the key ratings who arrived earmarked "Fortune" in place of the ones sent as advance party from the spare destroyer crew. The several others of minor importance must refer to reliefs sent from "Niobe" Manning Pool, as replacement for ratings who went sick, as this was done in a number of cases.

With reference to para. 3 and 4 of the said letter, it will perhaps be advisable to give in detail the history of each rating in question so that each case may be considered from a standpoint of leave :-

A.J.BIGGS, Ldg.Stwd. A1518.

This rating was the only Leading Steward available for draft in "Niobe" at the time, and although he was the Captain's Steward, the complement of "Saskatchewan" called for a Leading Steward and he was drafted to her with his consent. This rating arrived in "Niobe" on the 13th November 1941 and was drafted to the "Fortune" on 7th May 1943 as part of the Advance Party. He will have been absent from Canada two years shortly, but under the regulations he would not be entitled to leave until the ship goes in for her annual refit.



Charles F. STUBBERT, Sy.P.O. V22121.

This was another case where it was arranged that "Niobe" should make up the complement out of Manning Pool. This rating had been in "Niobe" from 13th November, 1941. He was drafted as part of the Advance Party on 7th May 1943. He is in almost the same position with regard to leave as Leading Steward Biggs, the rating referred to immediately preceding. Supply P.O. Stubbart was promoted to A/Warrant Supply Officer but Saskatchewan signalled "Niobe" that he could not be spared without relief. Saskatchewan's 091340 in answer to Niobe's 071345 to Saskatchewan refer. As no relief was available in "Niobe" he was not drafted off, and apparently is still borne in "Saskatchewan". It appears he should be relieved so that he can be made a Warrant Officer.

J. B. WALSH, Shipwright 3/cl. V26122.

This rating was also referred to in my paragraph 2 above, which cites the signals received from "Saskatchewan". He had been ashore in "Niobe" about fifteen and one half months prior to his draft to "Saskatchewan". He was considered a most efficient shipwright but he had been in "Niobe" longer than any other one in his category and was most anxious to go, so it was considered advisable to let him have some sea time.

L.A. LYONS, P.O. (S). V17025.

This rating referred to in my paragraph 2, had been overseas since 13th November 1941 and is in practically the same position as Leading Steward Biggs and Supply P.O. Stubbart with regard to leave.

R.R. HARVEY, Sto. I. V26246.

This rating was one of the Engineer Room Branch whom the Engineer Officer, "Niobe", thought it advisable to draft to the "Saskatchewan" in order to give her some trained engineer room personnel. He had had experience in H.M.S. "Winchester" and had taken a Mechanical Training Course at R.N.B. Devonport. He also arrived in "Niobe" when she was commissioned, viz. November 13th 1941, being drafted to the R.N. for sea time and training prior to his draft to "Saskatchewan".

J.P. McLEAN, E.P.O. C155.

This rating was another Engineer Room rating with experience and was drafted to "Saskatchewan" at the Engineer Officer's suggestion, in order to give her more well trained Engineer Room ratings. He arrived in "Niobe" from H.M.C.S. "Woodstock" on 1st October 1942 and was drafted to "Saskatchewan" on 10th June 1943 to complete her complement.

E. ROBSON, Stwd. V2322

This rating was drafted by H.M.C.S. "Avalon" to H.M.S. "Mansfield" on 13th March 1943. He came to "Niobe" via hospital and R.N.B. Chatham on the 11th June 1943 and was drafted to the "Saskatchewan" as relief on the 6th July 1943. He was drafted into "Avalon" again and drafted to H.M.C.S. "Arvida" from which ship he arrived, via U.K. Hospital, to "Niobe" on 17th October. He is now again in H.M.C.S. "Niobe".



L.G.TILLEY, S.A. V3972 *adm*

This rating referred to in my paragraph 2 above, arrived first in "Niobe" for "Iroquois" on September 26th 1942. He was drafted to "Iroquois" on February 9th 1943 and to "Niobe" on May 11th 1943. He was drafted to H.M.C.S. "Saskatchewan" the following day, May 12th, having been in the United Kingdom less than a year at the time.

D.G.PIPE, A/A.B. V16886 *MB*

This rating arrived first in "Niobe" on November 4th 1942. He qualified as a Q.R.II in "Excellent" in January 1943 and was drafted with the main body of the "Saskatchewan" on May 30th 1943, replacing another Quarters rating who had gone sick. He was the only Q.R.II available in "Niobe" for draft at the time and had only been here five months prior to his draft to H.M.C.S. "Saskatchewan".

W.B.LAHAY, L.R.A. 4/cl. V37451 *enr*

This rating arrived from "Stadacona" in the "Fortune" draft, arriving in "Niobe" May 11th and was drafted to H.M.C.S. "Saskatchewan" May 30th. His claim to time overseas as 12 months cannot be substantiated from Sub-Depot Records, "Niobe".

Arthur K. MacKAY, A/L/Smn. A2233 *dyf*

It would appear that a little more care could have been taken in arriving at the number of months these ratings had been overseas without leave, as this rating too came with the "Fortune" draft from "Stadacona" on May 11th 1943, and was drafted to the "Saskatchewan" on May 30th 1943.

R.E.WALSH, A.B. L.R.III. V3794 *ja*

This rating arrived in "Niobe" from "Lunenburg" on 7th May 1943 and was drafted to the "Saskatchewan" June 2nd 1943 to make up complement. He had about a year and a half of sea time prior to his draft to the "Saskatchewan", having served in the "Lunenburg" from 4th December 1941 to 7th May 1943. It is not known what leave he had during this period.

5. Reference H.M.C.S. "Avalon"s" letter to R.C.N. Depot dated 27th July, 1943.

My paragraph 4 above covers most of the points raised in this letter. With reference to the second paragraph of said letter, the promises claimed were not made by anyone in authority in "Niobe".

The records as to time spent in "Niobe" are set out in my paragraph 4 above. All Service documents for the ratings concerned were forwarded to "Avalon" on July 20th 1943 and should be held there by now. If they have not been received, it is requested "Niobe" be notified so same can be traced.



6. Reference H.M.C.S. "AVALON"'s letter of 26th July  
to R.C.N. Depot.

As to para. 4 of this letter, Lahay seems to be less entitled to leave than any of the others mentioned. He was drafted from "Stadacona" to "Niobe" for "Fortune", arriving on May 11th 1943 and drafted on May 30th 1943 to "Saskatchewan" with the main body.

Both Walsh the Shipwright and Walsh the L.R. III would appear to be meritorious cases for annual leave. It is not clear which one is being referred to, although it may be assumed it is Walsh the Shipwright.

7. It is trusted that the information given will be of some aid in settling the matters raised in the several letters mentioned.

*Alex. J. Stringer*  
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LIEUTENANT, R.C.N.V.R.  
Officer-in-Charge, R.C.N.  
Sub-Depot, H.M.C.S. "NIOBE".