

522. And you never saw any improvement?—No; except with regard to the forage and the officers' mess, which was improved. There was no improvement in the men's rations.

523. Do you know whether every battalion had orders issued regularly?—I do not know positively, but I have heard it said that we ought to be rather proud of ourselves, because ours was the only battalion where it was done.

524. You never saw any brigade orders?—No.

525. Nor any brigade staff?—No.

526. *Major Hawkins.*] Do you know Mr. McParland, the contractor, by sight?—No, I do not. I tried to meet him, but was never able to find him anywhere near the camp.

527. Do you know whether he had a representative in the camp?—No, unless the cook was supposed to be his representative.

528. You say the officers' mess was fairly satisfactory after Tuesday?—Yes.

529. Where was the food prepared?—At the cooking-trench, by the same cooks that cooked for the men.

530. *The Chairman.*] Do you think there would have been any objection on the part of the men in your company being told off as assistant cooks?—I believe if that had been done there would have been no trouble.

531. Do you think the men would have objected?—No, on the contrary.

532. You think they would have obeyed the order?—Yes, certainly.

533. Is there anything you wish to state to us that you have not been asked about?—Only—if I may be allowed to make a suggestion—that if there are any similar camps in the future no contracts be let for the rations. Let the companies cook their own rations and be responsible if there should not be sufficient food provided. If I had been allowed to have my own cooks there would have been no trouble.

534. Did your horses suffer at all through being in the camp?—They did.

535. What did you do with them when you went to Christchurch?—We took them back. The whole of the company did not go to Christchurch, and those men who did not go there took the horses back to Napier.

536. Is there anything else you can tell us?—Only with regard to the water-supply. I would like to mention that there was only one horse-trough for 850 horses. The first company that got there could water their horses all right, but after that the ground was worked up into slush, and it would take perhaps two hours to water them. We took our horses to the lake or dam, but there was no proper approach to it, and the place was very muddy. But it was better than getting no water at all.

Private JOSEPH CHARLES RUSTON examined. (No. 27.)

537. *The Chairman.*] You are a private in what corps?—The Ahuriri Mounted Rifles, Napier.

538. You were in camp with your company at Newtown Park in June last?—Yes.

539. Had you plenty of tent-room?—No, we had not.

540. How many were you in a tent?—On one occasion there were fourteen in the tent. I was in that tent myself.

541. And, of course, you had your arms and saddles with you?—Yes, we had to take them inside too.

542. Had you plenty of straw?—No. The first night we went into camp it rained so hard that there was 4 in. of water in the straw, where there was a hollow in the ground.

543. Did you report that to any one?—I told Sergeant-Major Clifton about it. We told our captain, and we shifted our tents on to the side of the hill the same day. We arrived at the camp about 12 o'clock on Sunday night, and then shifted on the Monday.

544. Had you plenty of straw on the hill?—No. We took what dry straw there was with us.

545. Did you ask your sergeant-major to apply for more?—They told us there was no more to be got.

546. With regard to the rations, what was the meat like?—It was very inferior.

547. Was it cooked?—It was half-cooked. Some of it was cooked.

548. Could the men eat it?—Some of them could, certainly.

549. On how many days was it not properly cooked?—Three days—Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. When it was not properly cooked I came down town and got my meals.

550. Did many of the men do the same?—Yes, any amount.

551. Did they obtain leave to go?—Yes, from their captain, with the exception of those who had any duties to perform.

552. Had you any vegetables?—One day there was vegetables, and potatoes with their skins on, boiled up with the meat. It was supposed to be hash. We could not eat it.

553. What was the bread like?—It seemed as if they had laid in a supply of bread a week before we came in. I did not taste a bit of bread from the time I arrived until I got to Lyttelton.

554. Was it stale?—It was mouldy.

555. Did the men eat it?—No, they left it.

556. What was the butter like?—That was very good.

557. And the tea and coffee?—Very bad.

558. Was there milk in it?—Very little. Most of it was thrown away.

559. Could the men drink the coffee?—No; it was the same as the tea. I believe it was the fault of the water.

560. Had you enough forage for the horses?—The second day we had enough. The sergeant-major told us to go and get more.

561. Had you not any on the Monday?—No; we were late going for it, and did not get any.

562. How did you manage on the Wednesday?—That was the same: there was a shortage.