

latter appear to have been placed last winter, when it was decided to give the troops two pairs of boots instead of one pair each. Owing to supplies from such manufacturers not being delivered fast enough, various lines of heavy boots were purchased from stocks held by warehousemen and retailers. The design and quality of the boots purchased as a result of this method were varied, and led the Boot-manufacturers' Association of New Zealand to state that they regarded the matter as unsatisfactory. The representatives of this association who waited upon me pointed out—(1) the desirability (a) of securing uniformity of design and sample; (b) of providing three fittings to every size—namely, narrow, medium, and wide; (2) the advantage and economy to be effected by (a) placing running instead of spasmodic orders, and (b) combined orders for boots and shoes (for the shoe absorbs the leather regarded as too poor in quality for the boot). At the request of these gentlemen I consented to Mr. C. J. Ward conferring with the Staff of the Quartermaster-General (3) with a view to preparing samples of one design and quality. When Mr. Ward had carried this out the samples were duly approved by the Department and the manufacturers, and tenders were then invited for 1916 supplies.

To secure uniformity of design I secured military lasts, which were ordered from Raymond and Co., Melbourne. The majority of these have been sold, without loss, to successful tenderers, and the balance are now held in store as a standby in case it is found necessary to extend orders for supplies. A comparison of prices (both being for delivery to Defence Stores, Wellington) stands as follows:—

	1915.		1916.	
	s.	d.	s.	d.
Boots	18	5	19	0
Shoes	6	9	6	6
Totals	25	2	25	6

It is to be observed that the 1916 boot has the advantage of two complete soles, while the 1915 pattern has but one; the advantage being that the boot is so constructed as to permit of the removal of the outer sole when it is worn out, and to leave the second sole for future use.

Taking into account the advance in price of leather and materials, together with the strict inspection to which manufactures are now subjected (both in factory and finally at store, Wellington), I regard the above prices as satisfactory. *No complaints in reference to these boots have reached me*; on the contrary, all reports on them speak highly of their design and quality.

In regard to the preservation of boots and their proper storage when received into store, this matter has had full attention, and expert advice tendered has been given effect to at small expense.

#### HOLDALLS AND HOUSEWIVES.

I am pleased to report in this connection that early this year I was able to come to a business-like arrangement with the executive of the committee of the Countess of Liverpool's Fund, whereby the committee are, at fixed prices, supplying our requirements in these two articles—namely, 3,000 holdalls, and 3,000 housewives per month. The organization of the society is fully extended over the North Island, and partly over the South Island, to meet this demand. These goods are far superior in quality to those hitherto obtainable, and no failure in deliveries has been experienced. I desire to record my sincere appreciation of and to acknowledge the patriotic enterprise characterizing the practical help which this society has afforded in regard to the supply of these two necessary articles.

#### FOODSTUFFS.

Referring now to the matter of acquiring supplies for camps and troopships, I have to report that this business has been entirely conducted by securing the competition of tenderers. In certain respects it was found advisable to extend the periods of contract, and in other cases to allow ample time within which merchants could tender. In the case of tinned foodstuffs in particular the contract for jam for camps was let by tender up to the end of this year. This action was occasioned by reason of the fact that considerable difficulty is being experienced in securing regular supplies of tinplates. Having placed the order with the successful tenderer—Messrs. Kirkpatrick and Co. (Limited), of Nelson—I have since taken steps through the High Commissioner for New Zealand in London to endeavour to secure shipment of supplies of tinplates required by the company to execute the contract.

Certain economies have been effected by arrangements made with the Imperial Government Supplies Branch in regard to fresh meat, cheese, and butter. It may be of interest here to state that for the closing months of the year 1915 it cost approximately 1s. 8d. per day per man to provide food for the men under training. The position in this respect for the present year 1916 is as follows:—

	Featherston Camp.		Trentham Camp.	
	s.	d.	s.	d.
January	1	6·006	1	5·5
February	1	6·023	1	5·5
March	1	7·739	1	7·5
April	1	7·732	1	7·5
May	1	7·871	1	8

The above covers the cost of three meals per man per day; also early morning tea or coffee, supper for guards and picquets, morning tea and afternoon tea. The latter is supplied on account of continuous parades and instead of allowing the men to drink water. An idea as to quantities of articles required is readily obtained from the following figures roughly covering