

The reason for (c) is that direct importers who for business and patriotic reasons desire to quote for military supplies hesitate to do so in competition with their wholesale customers, and consequently in such cases heavy loss can be sustained by the Government unless the most economical purchase is made by the Department. Then, again, a successful tenderer is oftentimes in a better position to conduct his buying-operations if his rivals in trade are not aware of the fact that he is a successful tenderer for military supplies. This protection to tenderers has had the effect of encouraging business houses to tender more freely, and has been much appreciated by contractors.

In cases where quotations are made on samples submitted or direct purchases effected by the Department, the office system inaugurated enables me to at any time look into particular cases with a view to justifying the action taken before orders are confirmed by me.

*Personal Equipment for Infantry.*

8. The position in regard to the variety and nature of this supply has not altered since my last report. The following table, however, will no doubt be of interest:—

Article.	Number of Each issued per Man.	Cost of Issue per Man.		
		1915.	1916.	1917.
<i>Personal Equipment.</i>				
Tunics .. .. .	2	£ 1 18 6	£ 2 9 9	£ 2 14 4
Trousers .. .. .	2	1 3 4	1 7 5½	1 13 6
Putties .. .. .	1	0 4 0	0 5 4½	0 6 5
Greatcoat .. .. .	1	1 16 0	2 2 5½	2 8 0
Hat and puggaree .. .. .	1	0 6 2	0 5 6½	0 9 8½
Cap .. .. .	1	0 4 2	0 4 3	..
Kit-bag .. .. .	1	0 3 3	0 3 3¼	0 4 0½
Blankets .. .. .	3	1 4 0	1 6 0	2 5 0
Braces .. .. .	1	0 1 3	0 1 0½	0 1 1½
Boots .. .. .	2	1 16 10	1 18 0	1 19 0
Drawers .. .. .	2	0 8 6	0 10 0	0 12 0
Shirts, working .. .. .	2	0 12 6	0 14 0	0 16 0
Shirts, under .. .. .	2	0 8 6	0 9 10	0 12 0
Shoes .. .. .	1	0 6 9	0 6 6	0 10 5
Suits, denim .. .. .	1	0 8 6	0 8 8	0 8 9
Socks .. .. .	3	0 3 0	0 4 0¾	0 4 4½
Cholera-belts .. .. .	1	0 1 2	0 2 1	0 2 3
Holdall .. .. .	1	0 0 4½	0 0 5½	0 0 3
Sea-kit .. .. .	1	0 0 4	0 0 2¾	0 0 6½
Jersey .. .. .	1	0 5 6	0 5 6	0 7 0
Housewife .. .. .	1	0 0 10	0 0 6	0 1 0
Knife, fork, and spoon .. .. .	1	0 1 6	0 1 6	0 1 6½
Plate and mug .. .. .	1	0 0 4½	0 0 4½	0 0 5½
Towels .. .. .	2	0 1 6	0 1 5	0 2 2
Sheet, waterproof .. .. .	1	0 8 9	0 8 5	0 9 6
		12 5 7*	13 16 8½*	16 9 4½*
<i>Accoutrements.</i>				
Identity-discs .. .. .	..	0 0 1	0 0 1	0 0 1
Rifle .. .. .	..	3 4 3	5 10 0	5 13 6
Slings, rifle, web .. .. .	..	..	..	0 1 0
Bayonet .. .. .	..	0 8 3	0 12 0	1 0 0
Scabbard .. .. .	..	0 2 5	0 6 10	0 0 6
Pull-through .. .. .	..	0 0 4	0 0 5	0 0 6
Oil-bottle .. .. .	..	0 0 3¾	0 0 10	0 0 6
Protector, F.S. .. .. .	..	..	..	0 0 6
Web equipment, pattern 1908 .. .. .	..	1 6 5	1 11 9	1 12 6
Water-bottle .. .. .	..	0 2 7	0 2 10	0 2 10
Implements, entrenching, heads .. .. .	..	0 1 2	0 1 4	0 1 9
Implements, entrenching, helms .. .. .	..	0 0 4¼	0 0 6	0 3 9
Mess-tins, complete .. .. .	..	0 3 10	0 3 4½	..
		5 10 0	8 9 11½	8 16 11

\* The percentage of increases are—1916, 12·67 per cent. over 1915; 1917, 19 per cent. over 1916 and 34 per cent. over 1915 prices. Having regard to the general upward tendency of all prices, improved quality, larger sizes in some articles, and the increased difficulties met by manufacturers in obtaining and retaining suitable assistance, I regard the increases as reasonable and satisfactory in view of further advances which have taken place since our contracts were let.