

1919.
NEW ZEALAND

TRANSPORT EPIDEMIC COMMITTEE

(REPORT OF THE).

(MR. MALCOLM, CHAIRMAN.)

Presented to the House of Representatives, 11th September, 1919, and ordered to be printed.

ORDERS OF REFERENCE.

Extracts from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

MONDAY, THE 9TH DAY OF DECEMBER, 1918.

Ordered, "That a Committee be appointed to inquire into the epidemic which took place on the transport conveying the 40th Reinforcements; to have power to call for persons and papers: the Committee to consist of Mr. W. H. Field, Mr. Forbes, Mr. McCallum, Mr. Malcolm, Mr. Scott, Mr. Veitch, and the mover."—(Hon. Sir J. ALLEN.)

Ordered, "That leave be granted the Committee to sit if the House is not still sitting."—(Hon. Sir J. ALLEN.)

REPORT.

THE Transport Epidemic Committee, which was set up for the purpose of inquiring into the epidemic which took place on the transport conveying the 40th Reinforcements, has the honour to report that it has taken evidence on the matter; but, as none of the officers and men of the 40th Reinforcements on board the "Tahiti" have yet returned to New Zealand, the Committee was limited to the evidence submitted by Mrs. J. R. Gibbons, consisting of extracts from letters of soldiers and others, and, on the other hand, to the evidence of officers of the Defence Department, the hearing of such evidence being open to the Press; and that on the evidence given before it the Committee finds as follows:—

1. *Command*.—The "Tahiti" was under the command of an officer who had previous transport-command experience and also a long experience in command in the actual firing-line, and has a reputation as an officer who is particularly careful of his men and who is devoted to their welfare and comfort.

2. *Accommodation*.—It was freely admitted that the conditions on board a transport are never equal to those on board a passenger-vessel, and that in times of rough weather or general sickness the conditions are exceedingly unpleasant. The "Tahiti," however, was as well (or better) provided for in respect of air-space and other accommodation as any other troopship. Though discomfort was suffered owing to the bad weather experienced immediately after leaving New Zealand, things went as well as usual until Sierra Leone was reached, where the troops arrived in normal condition, although some of the men were still suffering from the effects of vaccination.

3. *Food*.—The supply of food to the ship on leaving New Zealand was ample, and similar to that supplied to other transports. The quantity of food and delicacies for the sick was greater than usual, a six-months supply being on board; and the quality was fully up to the standard. The regulations provided that the menu should be as varied as possible, but the confinement, want of exercise, and tediousness of a long voyage make the meals appear monotonous. Experience in New Zealand convinces the Committee that, the epidemic having appeared on board, inevitable disorganization would follow, and that arrangements for cooking and supply of food would therefore suffer. The evidence submitted affirms that the regulations provide for less distinction between the officers and men than do those of the Expeditionary Forces of any other country.