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Carrying on with the Accountants in the American Expeditionary Forces*

BY C. B. HOLLOWAY

In my previous article† I promised to submit later a description of some of the more specific operations carried on by the accounting personnel of the American Expeditionary Forces. It so happens that the bureau of accounts has recently made reports to Mr. E. R. Stettinius, assistant secretary of war, and to the inspector general, American Expeditionary Forces, S. O. S., summarizing the operations of the bureau to date, and outlining the proposed development of accounting and finance operations in the American Expeditionary Forces in the future. A brief description of the subjects covered in these reports will perhaps convey a bird's-eye view of the magnitude and scope of the accounting and finance operations which the accountants of the American Expeditionary Forces are engaged in handling.

The report to the inspector general brought out the fact that during the period of five and one-half months of the life of the bureau of accounts, the following ground had been covered by an average force for the period consisting of one major (officer in charge), $2\frac{1}{2}$ captains, $1\frac{1}{4}$ first lieutenants, $3\frac{3}{8}$ second lieutenants, 9 enlisted men and $4\frac{1}{2}$ civilian clerks and girls:

(a) Standardization of forms and instructions for receipts, bills, financial channels, etc., in dealings of the American Expeditionary Forces with the French, British, Italian and Belgian governments for supplies and services furnished by and to the American Expeditionary Forces.

(b) Study, development and recommendations on accounting problems and outstanding obligations, etc., of the American Expeditionary Forces.

(c) Compilation of consolidated records and statistics on American Expeditionary Forces disbursements, contracts placed, etc.,—status of bills rendered by the French and British governments—and preliminary investigations of obligations assumed by the American Expeditionary Forces and not yet billed.

*Passed by censor.

†See *THE JOURNAL OF ACCOUNTANCY*, October, 1918.

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(d) Office administration, which includes in addition to mail and records, files personnel, etc., a section of laws, appropriations, regulations, etc., and training. This latter section is a rather interesting development of the bureau of accounts and is being operated by one sergeant, two enlisted men and a girl member of the Q. M. A. A. C. borrowed from the British government., All orders, circulars and bulletins of the American Expeditionary Forces are promptly indexed here so that any question as to existing regulations covering American Expeditionary Forces operations can immediately be turned up for reference. The same procedure is followed up for each appropriation act and special digests are made of all laws, appropriations, orders, etc., bearing on accounting and financial matters of the American Expeditionary Forces. Organization charts for the entire American Expeditionary Forces and special charts having to do with finance and accounts are available for guidance. In addition the more important reports of operations and recommendations made by the bureau of accounts are assembled in sequence digests. In this manner, arriving personnel even though unfamiliar with army organization or accounting, can be rapidly trained and made available for constructive work.

In the latter part of September a set of reports was made to Mr. E. R. Stettinius, assistant secretary of war. Copies of these reports were furnished to the secretary of war, Mr. Baker; to commanding general S. O. S., American Expeditionary Forces; to the representative of the treasury department in France and to the war department, Washington. These reports covered the following:

- a. Recommendations and plan for developing and working out accounting and finance operations of the American Expeditionary Forces.
- b. Report on existing American Expeditionary Forces departmental accounting methods.
- c. Statement of total approximate disbursements by American Expeditionary Forces departments to July 31, 1918.
- d. Summary of above disbursements classified between foreign governments, commercial concerns, pay of the army, etc.
- e. Summary of above by appropriation headings.
- f. Summary of total transactions and current status of bills rendered by the French government.

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g. Test classifications for one month by individual items of supplies paid for.

h. Memorandum on important and unusual operations of the American Expeditionary Forces requiring special investigations and adjustment in regard to accounting.

This report also included recommendations as to the method of arriving at estimates of future financial requirements in relation to military and supply programmes and availability of materials and supplies for purchase in Europe. Sundry other matters were incorporated into this report, but the above will indicate the enormity of accounting and finance operations over here with which the bureau is attempting to cope in a central control capacity.

Mr. Alexander S. Banks, certified public accountant and member of the American Institute of Accountants, came to France with Mr. Stettinius as accounting representative on his staff, and rendered a separate report in connection with his duties. It was a pleasure to co-operate with him as he readily grasped the magnitude of operations over here and the difficulties encountered. We had some very interesting personal experiences including a trip to the French and American fronts in connection with accounting for supply and sector transactions with the combatant troops. This trip took us through many historical spots including the Chateau Thierry district which had just been recovered from the Huns; Rheims, which was still under fire; Verdun, a ghostlike shell of former historical activity; the grave of Quentin Roosevelt on the sunny side of a sloping hill; the reputed base of one of the big guns which shelled Paris (abandoned by the Germans but not yet dismantled) and innumerable wrecked villages, chateaux, etc., many of which were former German headquarters.

Our automobile was chased down the deserted streets of Rheims by a Boche plane for a few startling moments; and in another sector near the front in pitch black darkness near the cross-roads another Boche plane dropped its flares and then nonchalantly sprinkled bombs around us. The sights we saw and the tales we heard will stand out always in our memories. Mr. Banks filled an empty wine bottle from the waters of the Marne, in the heart of the former district which was so gallantly saved by the American marines, and brought it back with him to Paris. He placed a label upon the bottle as follows: "Water taken from the

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Marne by A. S. Banks" on a certain date. Some wag on the staff of Mr. Stettinius wrote underneath "This is the only water taken by Mr. Banks in France." History does not record Mr. Banks' personal comments upon this addendum.

Returning to the less adventuresome and romantic phases of the bureau of accounts activities, Captain Raymond Ives, financial requisition officer, and I wish to express our appreciation of the coöperation which the American Institute of Accountants and its individual members have furnished in connection with the selection of accounting personnel for our purposes over here.

Mr. C. S. Ludlam of Haskins & Sells is expected to arrive shortly with a force of 25 commissioned accountants and 30 enlisted accountants selected for the bureau in the United States. Mr. Ludlam is expected to assume very important duties and with the other accountants will be a welcome addition to the force over here. All of them will soon be rendering valuable service to the army.

Since sending the previous article, the public accountants have been gaining further recognition in the American Expeditionary Forces and several of them who were commissioned as a result of cables to the United States have already been released by me upon special request for important duties elsewhere. Captain Wm. Whitfield, of Whitfield, Whitcomb & Co., has just been made financial requisition officer for England. Captain E. B. Wade has been released to act as officer in charge of the administration finance and accounts division of the engineers department. Lieutenant A. J. Stevenson has been sent to Italy to assist in developing accounting operations there. The statistical bureau of the general purchasing board has been placed under the supervision of the bureau of accounts and Captain J. J. Newman, formerly with Lybrand, Ross Bros. & Montgomery, has been placed in charge for the purpose of developing the operations of this bureau. Captain C. R. Stanley who came over as one of my original assistants in the engineer department, has been transferred therefrom to act as one of the chief assistants on the bureau of accounts.

I am leaving for England tomorrow to make a study of accounting problems there, and it has been arranged for me to make the trip from Paris to London by aeroplane, which will be a rare experience. It will only be a short time before representa-

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tives of the bureau will also be operating in Italy, Switzerland and Spain.

Mr. Isaac Marcossou who has been writing for the *Saturday Evening Post* and is now preparing a series of articles on the *Business of the War in the American Expeditionary Forces* recently visited the bureau and will include its operations in his series of articles which should appear in the *Saturday Evening Post* before many months. He seemed interested in this phase of army operations and in the work which public accountants are doing over here and has described the bureau by the catch phrase "*Factory of Accounts of the American Expeditionary Forces.*"

The strain over here is beginning to tell on those of us who have been the pioneers in the work and have been at it from the beginning without let-up or leave, and we are counting upon Mr. Ludlam's specially selected accountants (who are due to arrive soon) to "carry on" and permit us to relax before the efficient and relentless "medica" send us to the hospital or recuperation camp, which I, for one, have been narrowly dodging for a number of weeks.

We wish to thank the various accountants who have written us from time to time and whose letters we have been unable to answer on account of the press of work. Whether or not there is an armistice with the Germans there will not be an armistice with the accounting and financial problems of the American Expeditionary Forces for some time to come, and when it is all over the accountants will have helped to make history both during the war and in the period of settlement which will follow.