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DGES Land
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ALMALGAMATION OF THE WEAPON TRADES

I am writing this letter with the best intentions of the army at heart. I realise that by writing to you direct I am probably not complying with the correct procedures but, unfortunately, this is the only way I can get my, and many others, feelings and opinions to the Corps Committee regarding the new name for the weapon trades.

I am the Course Designer (Weapons) for the REME Trade School at Bordon (SEME). I served twenty-two years as an Armourer through to WO1 (ASM) Artificer Weapon. Since leaving the army I have been at SEME involved in instructing and course design for the weapon trades. I have served over forty years with REME and I am proud of being an Armourer.

Sometimes it is good to stand back from the woods and see the trees. There is no requirement to decide a new name for a trade that already exists - 'Armourer'. The dictionary has armourer as "Person who makes or mends arms and armour" or "Person who is employed in the maintenance of small arms and weapons in a military unit" The armourer trade is probably the oldest trade in the army. We already have enough political motivated people trying to dilute our history and traditions without the army doing it for them. I am a member of the Armourers Association and try to continue the proud traditions of the trade.

If we examine what has been done it is not that we have created a new trade, but have disbanded the Gun Fitter and placed the responsibilities of the heavy equipment's to the armourer. My views as the weapons desk officer within HQ SEME is that there is a strong possibility that the majority of the new trade will complete their career without being involved with any heavy equipment (AS90, CR2, Light Gun). Eighty percent of the proposed new trade posts will still be for the armourer role. The way the new trade has been structured is that the new tradesmen will be armourers with equipment specialist qualifications only if required to serve in units in the 'Gun Fitter' role.

With the continuous financial restraints being placed on the forces, it makes no sense to add additional costs to our over stretched budget that have no financial or practical benefit. The term 'Armourer' has not become dated, unlike the term 'Mechanic'. If it is decided to keep the name armourer there would be no requirement to alter any recruiting literature or



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official publications, such as EMERs, AESPs and Armourer Documents, that is costly and time consuming. This would not only save money and work, but would also enable the target date of April 2000 to be achieved with the minimum of disruption. There is no logic to change the name just for the sake of a change or expediency of another reorganisation. Both the Royal Marines and Royal Air Force have armourers and the RAF armourers carry out tasks beyond the normal armourer duties ie Ejector Seats and Bomb equipment, and have not deemed it necessary to change the name.

I have been informed that the final decision on the new name has been confirmed by the Soldier Manpower Committee and it will be 'Weapon Mechanic' thereby consigning a proud trade title which goes back to pre-Agincourt days to the dustbin. There is no necessity for this. Although this may seem a small issue 'What's in a name' there are strong feelings on this matter. These opinions are not just mine but are held by a considerable high proportion of the armourer trade, present and past. In this new age of liP it is encouraged that senior management listen to the people on the ground and take into consideration their opinions and feelings. I hope that this letter is not too late to reverse the decision and that the views stated will be considered and you can influence a possible change of heart.

It would be sad if REME is remembered, not for all the modernisation and re-organisation of the corps, but for being responsible for the extinction of one of the oldest and proudest of the armies trade disciplines 'The Armourer'.

I hope you will receive this letter with an open mind and appreciate the concern that has forced me to write it

P F GUNN
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