

over, followed by all other mercantile departments and employers, is to make such alterations in the personnel and placing of the staff as the exigencies of the business require. This is the only satisfactory way of carrying on any commercial undertaking. While the petitioner declaims against what he calls reductions in positions, he has been most discreetly silent in connection with the raising of similar positions in other parts of the Dominion, and the promotions of an increasing number of men from one grade to another which have steadily taken place, particularly during the last few years.

(b.) In due course, when the members filling the positions referred to have worked through the intermediate class which stands between them and the maximum position obtained by the previous occupant of the position (who, I might mention incidentally, had in all cases progressed by scale increments through the various intermediate grades), the present holder of the position will, of course, attain to the same maximum as his predecessor. With regard to the second part of the request—namely, that Railway officers shall not be less efficiently remunerated than officers of the Post and Telegraph Department—I have already pointed out in dealing with clause 18 of the petition the inconsistent attitude of the petitioner, who wants all the benefits accruing to Postal officers, but objects to accept any of their disabilities. I cannot too strongly deprecate the attempt that has been made to introduce an outside Department into a question that merely affects the Railway Department of the Dominion, and to make comparisons between two Departments whose functions and conditions of business are entirely dissimilar.

(c.) The travelling-allowances payable to Railway officers are quite sufficient to meet their reasonable out-of-pocket expenses. The fact that travelling-allowances payable to the officers of the Post and Telegraph Department are higher than those paid by the Railway Department is no argument in favour of increasing the Railway allowances. I have already pointed out that the positions of relieving officers in the Railway service are eagerly sought after and reluctantly relinquished. This of itself may be taken as a clear indication that even with the present scale of payment relieving officers, at all events, suffer no financial disabilities. The question, however, resolves itself into one of cost. The Department's schedule is, as I have indicated, sufficient to cover reasonable expenses, and for financial reasons they should not be increased.

(d.) The leave granted Railway officers covers a reasonable period, and in addition to the period of leave they are furnished with free passes for themselves, wives, and families. This latter concession the officers of the Post and Telegraph Department do not participate in. Sick-leave, as already pointed out, is paid for by the Department, and there are very many cases in which payments are made for periods extending for as long as six months. Generally speaking, the Railway officer is more advantageously situated in respect to leave than the Postal officer. I am not in favour of extending the leave, nor of departing from the position that the Department has been forced to take up in respect to the deduction of sick-leave. The members of the First Division form but a fractional part of the whole Railway service. Any extension of leave granted to the First Division must in equity be granted to the Second Division members, and the cost to the Department would be enormous.

(e.) I have already stated that where Railway officers perform work that is regarded as being necessary the Department pays an extra day's wages for the extra day's work. I am not prepared to recommend any alteration in the practice, which I consider is a reasonable one.

(f.) It is the invariable practice of the Department to pay all out-of-pocket expenses of officers transferred to meet the exigencies of the Department for the period specified in the regulations. The limitation of this period is essential. So far as the expenses of officers transferred by way of punishment is concerned, there is no reason why such officers should be relieved of their responsibility to bear the consequences of their own misconduct and to pass that responsibility on to the Department.

(g.) I have already dealt fully with this clause. I merely desire to again emphasize the fact that clause (g) is utterly inconsistent with the request made in (b), (c), (d), and (e).

(h.) The Appeal Board as at present constituted has been in operation since 1897. The Board has done good work, and there is no cogent reason why the present constitution of the Board should be altered; but in any case, no matter what the constitution of the Board is, it is imperative that the Minister in charge of the Department, who is responsible for and has to justify the work of the Department, should retain the power to finally determine the matter, or, in other words, that the decision of the Board should be subject to the veto of the Minister. In no other way can the best interests of the public and the Department be preserved.

I have, &c.,

T. RONAYNE,

General Manager.

The Chairman, Railways Committee, House of Representatives.