

and extended leave of absence has been granted the extended leave only should be deducted from the annual leave; so that an officer should receive the whole of his annual leave provided the period during which he has been absent on sick-leave does not exceed four weeks. Now, as showing that this was the intention, we have a letter from the Hon. the Minister of Railways, written on the 6th October, 1909, dealing with this matter. This I may say, however, was before the regulations which were passed in 1910. The letter states—"Head Office, Wellington, 6th October, 1909.—SIR,—With reference to your letter of the 30th August respecting the question of payment of members of the First Division for sick-leave, I have the honour to inform you that under the regulations members off duty sick may be paid up to twenty-eight days, and it has been decided that in all cases where the period exceeds twenty-eight days the difference shall be taken as a set-off against any annual leave that may have accrued or be accruing to the member concerned during the year in which payment for sick-leave was granted. I regret no alteration can be made in this arrangement, which has been brought about by the abuses that have in the past taken place in connection with sick-leave.—I have the honour to be, sir, your obedient servant, J. A. MILLAR, Minister of Railways." That shows that the Department was prepared only to deduct over the twenty-eight days.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* We will give reasons later on for altering it. That was before the alteration was made—it was the old practice.

*Witness:* Then we come to clause 13 in the petition, which deals with leave of absence. We submit that no valid reason has been advanced in the report which has been made to the Committee by the Railway Department why the officers in the Postal Department should receive more leave of absence than the officers of the Railway Department.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* I will put in a copy of the Civil Service Regulations *re* holidays, which apply to all servants outside the Railway Department.

*Witness:* You will therefore see that the position is this, sir: that the officers in the Post and Telegraph Department are entitled to a maximum of thirty-three days, as against twelve days to the Railway officers, and four departmental holidays. We submit, sir, that, on the contrary, the Railway officers are entitled to, if not more, then, at any rate, the same leave of absence. The strain on a Railway officer is infinitely greater than the strain on an officer in the Post and Telegraph Department. Any mistake by a Railway officer may lead to great loss of life, and it is only natural that when a man has that fear over him that it would have a deterrent effect on his health, and on that ground alone he is entitled to as large a number of days leave of absence as an officer in the Post and Telegraph Department. Now, coming to clause 14, which relates to duties on Sundays. If I understand correctly the report which has just been read, the contention of the Department is that the reason why Railway officers should not be paid for Sunday duty is because there would be a tendency to go on duty on Sundays. If I am correct, then I submit, sir, that the Department cannot be serious in this contention. If you examine the petition you will see that the position is that officers are required to go on duty in connection with certain matters—viz., (a) Ordinary suburban trains to and from seaports; (b) trains leaving starting stations on Sunday; (c) trains leaving starting stations on Saturday and finishing the run on Sunday, &c. With regard to doing Sunday duty in connection with Sunday trains, the absurdity of the position is apparent. A train may leave on a Saturday night late—say at five minutes to 12—and not return till 7 o'clock in the morning. If an officer had to go on duty at, say, 5 on Sunday morning in connection with that train he would receive no payment at all, because it is considered continuous duty. Why make a distinction between a train leaving at five minutes to 12 on Saturday night and one leaving at five past 12 on the Sunday? If it leaves on Sunday at that time an officer is entitled to be paid, but if it leaves on the Saturday at five minutes to 12 he gets nothing at all. There is another point in connection with Sunday duty—namely, that in the Accountancy Department every four weeks the officers are compelled, if they are to get through the work at all, to work on Sundays. Coming to clause 16, with reference to the question of personal expenses, I am not going to deal with that at any great length beyond saying that it must be obvious that it is not sufficient to allow an officer only two days at the commencement of a journey and one week after arrival at destination during which personal expenses shall be allowed. Any of us who travel about the country know how difficult it is to get house accommodation in any of the towns—at any rate, it is almost impossible to obtain a house within a week. So far as clause 17 is concerned, our main argument is this: that where an officer is transferred by way of punishment, that he suffers sufficient monetary loss without being required to pay for his travelling-expenses. A cursory glance at this clause should convince you on that point. There is a reduction in salary from £5 to £55 per annum, loss of pay through suspension, loss of salary during transfer, loss of expenses incurred in connection with the transfer of family and effects, and reduction in value of superannuation retiring-allowance. Surely, if he is punished in all those directions he is punished quite sufficiently without having also to pay his travelling-expenses. In regard to clause 18, our arguments in connection with that are fully set out in the petition, and all we ask is that if any legislation is brought down this year affecting Railway officers that they should be afforded an opportunity of being heard before it becomes law. Clause 19 deals with the Appeal Board. The position is simply this: that under the Act as it exists at present a decision given by the Appeal Board is simply in the form of a recommendation to the Minister, of which he can approve or not at his pleasure. Generally speaking, the recommendations that have been made by the Appeal Board have given satisfaction to officers, but the drawback is that, although this is so, they are frequently vetoed by the Minister of Railways.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* I should like you to give some concrete instances of recommendations having been vetoed.

*Witness:* I say there is a number of instances where recommendations have been made and they have been vetoed. The Minister has referred to this Board as an irresponsible Board, but I am not quite sure—