

expenses an amount that would fairly represent the ordinary cost of living in their household. They were paid the 10s. a day for themselves and actual out-of-pocket expenses—that is, the full hotel bill and carting expenses or anything of that kind that they incurred for their wives and families, less the deduction. The deductions were not satisfactory, and a large number of vouchers were sent back for revision. The Chief Accountant of the Railways queried a very considerable proportion of them, and when he was unable to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion as a result of correspondence with the member concerned the vouchers were put before the General Manager, who took the matter up, and whenever those vouchers were questioned in regard to the cost of living the stand taken up by the officer was invariably that he had made a fair deduction, and the amount represented his household expenses. Well, like the representative of the institute to whom I have referred, the Department all the time marvelled at the economies achieved in railway households.

5. Could you give an example of the average amount of deduction made?—I dare say I could. Here is one case where a man, for himself, his wife, and family of six, deducted £1 10s. a week.

6. What salary was he getting?—£250. Here is another instance where a man deducted £1 5s.

7. *The Chairman.*] How do you mean he deducted £1 5s. a week?—Well, suppose his voucher was for fourteen days, he would claim 10s. a day for himself for the fourteen days, and hotel expenses for his wife and family. The total might be £16, or £18, or £20. Out of that he would perhaps take off £3, which he claimed represented the cost of living in his own home. Here is another man, a shed foreman, who took off £1 10s. a week for himself, his wife, and four children. A clerk took off £1 a week for himself. The Department did not raise any objection to that. Another man, for himself, his wife, and family of five, allowed 4s. 6d. a day; another man, for himself, his wife, and family of six, 5s. 6d. a day; another single man, 2s. 6d. a day. Another man deducted £2 a week, but the number of the family is not stated. Another man, for himself, his wife, and two children, 4s. a day; another, with six of a family, 8s.; and another, with four of a family, 8s. a day. Those are just a few instances out of a large number that I have here.

8. *Mr. Ross.*] The deductions were made on the basis of the cost of food in their own homes?—The deductions were supposed to be made on the basis of the ordinary cost of their living—a man's fair living-expenses in his own home.

9. Not clothing and everything connected with living, but ordinary food?—That is right—ordinary everyday household expenses. That is what they were told to make a deduction of, and that is a reasonable thing, and the officers asserted that was the basis of their deductions. Now, it is all very well for the institute to contend, sir, that two days at the commencement of a journey is not sufficient, but the Department claims that if the members of the Railway service make their arrangements ahead—timely notice of the intention to shift them is given in, I believe, nearly all cases; but there are, of course, odd cases of emergency—there is no reason why the men cannot get their arrangements forward the same as they do when moving from house to house to suit their own convenience. So far as the packing is concerned, an officer is allowed to get any reasonable assistance that he requires. The Department provides him with packing-cases, and if he gets cases himself the Department pays for them. If he gets any packers to assist, the Department pays, and the same thing happens at the other end of the journey. Now, in respect to this, I submit that there is no reason why the Railway Department should be called upon to relieve a man wholly of his household expenses and keep his family for an unreasonable time merely because it is transferring him. Where the Department pays the contingent expenses, which cover the out-of-pocket expenses of the man, I submit to the Committee that the Department is doing all that it can reasonably be expected of it, and it is following the practice elsewhere. Now, with regard to the matter of packing up while on duty, or being on duty while he should be packing up, in some cases that may happen. It does not happen in all of them by a long way, and officers can and do get assistance, as I have stated. Where there is a difficulty in a man getting a house after his arrival at destination, it is within the knowledge of the Department that time off on pay is given to look round. The men are not expected to go straight into the station and take control immediately, and the Department would be very surprised indeed to find that that were done in the bulk of cases. I know that it is done in some cases, but I do not think those cases form the rule by any means. Now, the general practice is for the officers on transfer to claim the full allowances for personal and contingent expenses under the regulations. The Department does not find fault with them for doing that. It says that the officers are quite entitled to the allowances granted by the regulations up to or within the full time fixed by those regulations; but the Department knows from the experience in connection with the receipts obtained by the officers and sent in attached to their transfer vouchers what class of house they stay at. It is all very well for a particular officer to say he personally would not stay at a hotel where the tariff was, we will say, £1 10s. a week, but I put in a list the other day containing the names of hotels which were simply picked out at random from among the advertisers in the Railway Guide, and, if I remember aright, outside of one hotel, there were none over 8s. a day. The bulk ran from 6s. to 6s. 6d. a day and £1 5s. to £1 15s. a week. While I have had no experience of those houses, there is no reason to suppose that they are other than reputable commercial houses at which our officers would in many instances be compelled to stay, and we know, sir, that they do stay at that class of house. Now, I propose to put in a statement compiled from the vouchers for one four-weekly period, and showing the actual amounts that have been paid at hotels at which members of the First Division actually stayed. The vouchers were supported by receipts sent in by Stationmasters, clerks, &c. This statement fully confirms the conclusion arrived at and submitted to the Committee previously, after having examined the advertisements in the