

of the Railway service would look back on the history of the Department and contrast their present conditions with the conditions existing before the Government passed the first Classification Act they would find a lot to be appreciative of, and we would have less of this distrust and suspicion. It does not matter what is done, you have the same sort of thing to contend against every time. In Victoria, as soon as the Railway Commissioners there introduced a new scale of pay and of their own volition gave the staff increases to the extent of £115,000 per annum, every one was at their throats, and there was seething discontent. We are told here there is seething discontent from 1st January to 31st December. Where, then, is the inducement to make any alterations in the Classification Act at all. Supposing the Government, instead of introducing the Act of 1907, had let the 1901 Act go along, every one would have been satisfied. The staff thought that was a fine Act, but as soon as it was proposed to give them something better they, like *Oliver Twist*, clamoured for more, and they want more every time. If the service would give the Department credit for sometimes trying to improve the conditions of the staff, and have a little more confidence in the honesty of purpose of the head of the Department, they would find that things would be very much more comfortable both for the Department and for the staff. The Department is honestly trying to do its best for the staff, and I want to make this point perfectly clear: speaking with an intimate knowledge of the reasons for which it was desired to introduce this clause, and although I cannot, of course, give the reasons here (the Minister has had them, and he is satisfied), I can say without any hesitation that every member of the staff would after hearing the explanation be satisfied that that clause would be a benefit to the Railway service. I do not wish to say anything more on the question.

7. *Mr. Ramsay.*] When you were secretary of the institute, Mr. McVilly, did you not approach Parliament with a view to the Post and Telegraph Department's classification being adopted in connection with the Railways Act?—No, I did not; that is absolutely incorrect.

8. Well, did the institute at that time?—No. The members of the Railway staff, as I explained, were invited by the then Minister of Railways, the late Sir Alfred Cadman, to meet in Wellington and submit certain proposals which had been receiving consideration at the hands of some gentlemen, I think, at that time in Auckland. They met about the time I came up to Wellington, and I was elected the delegate for Wellington on the first council. I personally opposed classification on that council, as I have opposed it ever since. I wanted a reasonable scale of pay, and promotion absolutely by merit. Then I was elected general secretary of the institute. As general secretary of the institute I put before the Department the institute's policy, which, however, was not in accord with my own ideas all the same, and I made that perfectly clear whenever I had an opportunity. If I wished to ask a question on any point I was very careful to make my position clear all the time, and that was that I was not in accord with classification.

9. But the policy of the institute at that time was the Postal classification?—No, pardon me, it was not. The institute at that time was more reasonable. The institute asked the Government to improve the conditions of the service, and subsequently they battled for the Postal classification. We never asked for the Postal classification straight out.

10. You said there is a similar clause in the Post and Telegraph Act as was proposed to be inserted in the Railways Act last year, did you not?—Yes, but I have not read it just lately.

11. I suppose you had a copy of the regulations by you at the same time?—No, I cannot say I did.

12. Does not that clause in the Post and Telegraph Act—instead of saying, “to be paid any sum within the maximum and minimum,” it leaves out the words “and minimum”?—I cannot say from memory.

13. Is it not a fact that the clause in the Post and Telegraph Act reads, “The Governor in Council may from time to time, on the recommendation of the Minister, fix the amount of salary to be paid to an officer at any sum within the maximum limits of the class or grade in which such officer is placed under the provisions of this Act, and such amount shall be the salary payable to such officer or in respect of the office which he holds, without annual increment”?—We will assume that is so, and we will take the £200 to £260 grade if you like. An officer is getting £220 in the Post and Telegraph, and £220 is within the minimum and also within the maximum. What is wrong in saying the limit shall be fixed between this maximum and minimum? From my point of view the putting-in of the word “minimum” is a protection to the men. The suggestion seems to be that there is some ulterior motive in putting in the word “minimum,” but there is not. If a man is a competent clerk, and the maximum salary, £260, is fixed for the position, the Department would not fix that man's salary at £220. If a man is a clerk his pay has to be fixed at not less than the minimum and not more than the maximum.

14. So that if the maximum in the Post and Telegraph Department is £220 the salary could not be fixed at anything below that?—No, I have not said that. I said distinctly that it is quite within the power of the Secretary of the Post Office to fix his maximum at anything he thinks fit. The Railway Department takes this view: that it was a fair thing to provide that a man may not receive less than the minimum and not more than the maximum.

15. Supposing this clause were to become law, would it not be possible to fix a man at a certain position, and even although he was an inefficient man he could not possibly go to a higher grade?—All I need say is that the Railway Department would not be guilty of any such thing. It would be distinctly wrong to do it, and the Department would not do it.

16. That may be your opinion now, but it does not necessarily follow that it will be the opinion of the Department in years hence?—The opinion of the Department since I have been connected with it has always been to do the right thing, and I have never known the Department to adopt the pulling-down process, and I say emphatically it is impossible to use this clause in the sense you are suggesting.

17. But my point is that it would be possible?—No.