

15. Very well; if a man were off forty-two days and he had thirty-four days due to him, how could you deduct forty-two from thirty-four?—But you would take the whole thirty-four away from him and he would have no leave.

16. Well, the whole period for which he was paid when he was off sick would not be deducted, but merely the first leave would be forfeited?—They might even deduct the balance off him from his next leave.

17. Can you quote a case where that has been done?—No, I cannot quote a case.

18. Now, you said that the reason given by the Department for the alteration in the regulation was to overcome or was in consequence of malingering?—That is so.

19. I think you stated that you admitted there were malingers?—I said there were a few.

20. You admit that fact?—I admit there is a few.

21. Now, Mr. McPherson, seeing that your institute represents, as you claim, 90 per cent. of the officers, will you quote for the information of the Committee one solitary case in which the Railway officers have ever brought under the notice of the Department the fact that some of the members were malingering—will you quote one solitary case?—No, I have no records. I could not say whether they have or not, nor can I say whether there have been any cases.

22. Well, seeing that the officers knew that malingering was going on and did not report it, can you blame the Department for taking action to protect the public revenue?—I did not say the officers knew and did not report it.

23. You admitted it?—Excuse me, you are trying to make me say that the officers knew of it and did not report it.

24. Well, Mr. McPherson, I am not trying to make you say anything you have not already said?—I said that there may possibly be a few malingers.

25. Well, I am asking you to state any instance in which this was brought under the notice of the Department. Is it within your knowledge that four years ago the Railway Officers' Institute made serious complaints to the Minister at an interview they then had with him respecting the position of leave of the First Division?—The annual leave of the First Division on a certain section, I believe.

26. Well, that is within your knowledge?—Yes.

27. The complaint was that the leave was seriously in arrears, was it not?—The complaint could be turned up from the records or file by the secretary of the institute.

28. I am only asking you to state what is within your own knowledge?—Well, I cannot say.

29. Well, when the institute brought that matter under the notice of the Minister an explanation was given by the Department, and I would like to ask you whether, after that explanation was given, you are aware of the institute having taken any steps to put the matter of leave on a more satisfactory footing so far as malingering is concerned?—It is the duty of the Department to deal with malingers, not the institute.

30. Do you not regard it, then, to be the duty of the institute, as representing officers loyal to the Department, or who ought to be loyal to the Department, to bring under the notice of the Department irregularities which must be within their knowledge?—It is the duty of the officers in charge of any man malingering to point that man out to the Department. That is the duty of any man in charge of men.

31. Now, do you know the extent to which the leave had got into arrears owing to this malingering?—No, I cannot say from my own knowledge; but, as I said before, the records could be turned up to prove or disprove any statement.

32. Now, in regard to that particular case you referred to of an officer not having any leave for three years owing to being away sick, will you give me the particulars of that case?—Yes, I will show you the papers. The correspondence was as follows: "District Traffic Manager, ——. Annual Leave.—Mr. — has now been off duty over a month on sick-leave, and on this account, according to the regulations, will require to forego his annual leave this year. This is thought to be an especial hardship, as, unfortunately, through a similar cause Mr. — had no annual leave last year. The undersigned members of the — traffic staff respectfully request that one day's leave of absence be deducted from their annual leave, and that the total number of days (fifteen) thus acquired be granted to Mr. — as annual leave. If your request be acceded to we would like, if possible, that the leave be granted from the day Mr. — intends to resume duty." That was put through in the usual way by the Stationmaster. Then, on the 12th June those members who signed the letter asked, through the Chief Clerk of the station, to receive a reply to the letter, which they received as follows: "29th June, 1911.—Stationmaster ——.—Your action in advising members of your staff, in reply to their application of 12th instant, that their request to have one day deducted from their annual leave, and that the leave so deducted be granted to Mr. — cannot be complied with, is approved."

33. Mr. Arnold.] What was this man suffering from?—I have no knowledge of that.

34. Mr. McVilly.] Can you tell the Committee what the practice is in regard to the Postal Department? You say in the petition that they have seven public holidays, making twenty-eight in all. Can you tell the Committee whether it is a fact that those days are added to the annual leave?—The regulations will bear that out.

35. The institute has put Schedule E in with the object, I take it, of showing that the Postal Department get seven days added to their annual leave of twenty-one days. I want to know if that is so?—Yes, that is according to the Post Office Regulations. I am assuming that the regulation dealing with the matter of the Post and Telegraph Department is correct, and that it is correctly stated in the schedule. The new regulation which I referred to in my statement has made some alterations.

36. I do not want to deal with the matter from a different standpoint to what you are dealing with it. What regulation do you refer to in which you say there has been an alteration?—There was a regulation which the Hon. Mr. Millar said he would put in.