

out in connection with other requests contained in the petition, they all narrow down to the question of cost. The Department is, I contend, doing the reasonable thing—that is, it is giving the men a reasonable concession, and at the same time protecting the public interest and the public revenue. With regard to the concluding paragraph of clause 12 of the petition—"That owing to the interpretation placed by the Railway Department on Regulations 55 and 56 there are many cases where Railway officers have not received any leave for recreation purposes for three years"—I should just like to say that so far as the Department is concerned no such cases have come under its notice. A man cannot accumulate his leave for a greater period than two years—that is, thirty-four or thirty-six days, as the case may be. Well, if he is off twenty-eight days we give him six or eight days of the two years' accumulation. If he is off three months we merely deduct the accumulated leave due to him as a set-off against his sick-leave, and then the officer is entitled to his annual leave in twelve months from the time he resumes duty. Now, as I have already stated, the Department knows of no case in which any officer has not had leave for recreation purposes for three years. It was suggested the other day that officers had asked in a certain case that a comrade might be allowed to go off for fifteen days, and that so many officers offered to give one day apiece to enable that to be done. On the face of it the refusal of the Department to allow that sort of thing to be done may perhaps seem hard; but what are the facts? The facts are these: that there is no provision in the Act or regulations by which the Department could allow a thing of that kind to be done; but what the Department did do was this: in response to a personal inquiry made on behalf of that officer by his own brother, he was told by the Department that if he was not able to do his duty and was not altogether right he was to go off, that the Department would, under the circumstances, be quite satisfied to accept his statement that he was not sufficiently well to continue work. This man, I understand, suffered from eye trouble. The Department did not want him to return to duty one day before he was able to, nor did it want to inflict any hardship on him. He could have gone off on sick-pay, and can still do so. There is no question about that. The Department did not want the other officers to do the charitable thing. The Department was quite prepared to treat that man as it has treated other men, fairly, equitably, and liberally. We are doing that every day.

2. *Mr. Arnold.*] Would he be permitted to leave the district?—Oh, yes, he could go anywhere he liked. The Department imposed no restrictions at all; and, further than that, it said, if he did not feel well enough to come back at a stated time, then he should stay another week or a fortnight instead of coming back too soon. He was not to return until quite fit for duty. I have looked into the matter, and the facts show that the Department was prepared to treat the officer referred to generously without requiring the other officers to do any charitable thing. We do not want other officers to lose anything. We were and are quite prepared to let that man off at any time if he applies; but up to the present time, as far as I know, he has not asked to get off. Those are the facts from the Department's view.

3. *The Chairman.*] Is that the advice received from the officer immediately concerned, or is it on the file in the Department?—The record shows that he applied to the District Officer, and the District Officer advised the Stationmaster that he could not agree to the suggestion of the other officers giving up one day each. If my word is doubted at all I can bring the man's own brother to state the position. The brother personally made representation, and he was told to tell his brother that, while the offer of the other officers could not be accepted, the Department was quite prepared to let him go off on full pay just the same as it had done previously when he was ill, and that so far as the Department was concerned it did not want him to come back until he was completely recovered and felt perfectly satisfied he was fit to resume duty.

4. *Mr. Witty.*] Was the officer who sent the letter along informed to that effect?—As I say, the District Officer dealt with the case and notified the Stationmaster that the Department could not concur in the suggestion of the officers to each forego a day's leave. After that the man communicated with his brother, who then spoke to the head of the Department. He was told to advise his brother in the terms I have stated, and, of course, the Department then, following the usual practice, waited for the man to make further application.

5. *The Chairman.*] He was not communicated with officially?—No, not direct. He communicated with his brother, and his brother was told to advise him as stated. If the man was to apply to-morrow he would be let off on pay on sick-leave, but he has not applied. I may say that that is not a solitary case, because we have cases in which men do go off sick and, after resuming duty, subsequently get a relapse, and we let them off again on pay. It is the same with accidents. If a man suffers from an accident and goes off on sick-pay, resumes duty, and subsequently goes off again as a result of the accident, we do not unreasonably question it. We regard it as the result of the original accident, and pay accordingly for the time he is off. I just want to make that position quite clear, because when the matter was before the Committee the other day I had no recollection of the case. I have had it looked up since to get the facts, and take this early opportunity of putting the actual facts of the matter before the Committee in order to remove any wrong impression that may have been created in respect to the Department's action in the matter. Now, with respect to the question of the seven extra days that it is stated are granted to the officers in the Postal Department, I would like to point out that the Postal officers do not get these seven days added to their leave. If an officer of the Postal Department works on any portion of a day and he is paid overtime, if it is only 2s. 6d., he gets nothing added to his leave. If he works and does not get paid, then he gets the time off. He does not get it added to his annual leave, but has to take the time off at the convenience of the Postal Department. The days named in the schedule are the Postal departmental holidays, the same as the four departmental holidays in the Railway Department. Originally, as most members know, the Railway departmental holidays were limited to three; when the leave rota was brought into operation by the Department, at the request of the staff, in order to enable the officers to get their leave sometimes in the summer