

portion of the curriculum in our higher educational system. My policy aims to raise the standard of attainment right throughout the service. Only by effort and careful study properly directed can the principles of transportation science be thoroughly mastered; and the scheme which I have in view is designed to afford not only the means of study but the necessary direction towards the proper end.

Already in the older countries the Railway authorities are working in the closest co-operation with the universities to raise the status of railwaymen, so far as the same may be done along the line of educational attainment, while in Great Britain there has been established an Institute of Transport along the lines of the Institutions of Civil and Mechanical Engineers, with the same object in view. The result is that the work of Railway executives is being more and more regarded as professional in its nature, the object being to place the railways in a position to rank with the professions in attracting the best brains of the community.

Not only do I aim to raise the standard of knowledge and to develop the latent abilities of railwaymen, but I desire to give every employee in the Department equality of opportunity. Much has been heard in the past of a so-called "division barrier." Much of this may have been quite unjustified; but it is undeniable that among the Second Division at least there has been a good deal of belief in its existence as a factor tending to hinder their advancement. Anything that can be done to eradicate this feeling is, I believe, a step in the right direction, and I am hopeful that in the development of my proposals for staff education the members of the Second Division in particular will understand my desire in this direction and take the fullest advantage of the opportunities that may be afforded them.

A further section of my policy in relation to the staff is that which takes the direction of utilizing the combined knowledge of the staff in the solution of every problem that arises within the Department. I found my conclusions in this respect on the principle that the man who takes an interest in his job should be able to make a valuable contribution—especially in the practical aspect—to any discussion about that job. To attain the end I have indicated I have encouraged the convening of conferences of Business Agents, for instance, and others, with a view to having "round-the-table" discussions in the freest and frankest manner possible of all the problems that touch the daily work of those concerned. At these conferences there is an exchange of ideas and an analysis and synthesis of knowledge which must lead to sounder decisions than would otherwise be the case. Moreover, such a procedure, through giving a better understanding of the reasons underlying decisions, must make those decisions more acceptable to those whose work it will be to carry them into effect. It is plain also that exchange of ideas among many must result in a greater richness of ideas among all, and this, I believe, is the surest road to the removal of misunderstandings.

I have found as I have moved about the system that the Railway staff in general adopt a thoughtful attitude towards their work, and evolve ideas which appear to them to represent improvements on the present practice. The difficulty up to the present, however, seems to have been one of communicating their ideas to those who would have authority to order their adoption, and it is with the object of overcoming this difficulty that I have made it a part of my policy to encourage the controlling officers to confer freely with those under their control.

SUGGESTIONS AND INVENTIONS COMMITTEE.

Another means which was designed to the same end was the establishment of a Suggestions and Inventions Committee. The intention to establish this committee was mentioned in my Statement of last year, and a review of the particulars given hereunder will indicate that the staff are taking a keen interest in the welfare of the Department, and that the committee is meeting the need for which it was established. Since the inception of the committee on the 15th June, 1925, up to the 31st March, 1926, there have been received a total of 858 suggestions and inventions for consideration. Of these sixty-two were recommended for adoption, six are on trial, 165 are still under investigation, and 625 were not adopted.