

CHAPTER 18

APPEALS TO THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

There are grievances which, notwithstanding the innovations proposed in Bills C-170 (Public Service Staff Relations Act) and C-181 (Public Service Employment Act), remain under the jurisdiction of the Civil Service Commission and are dealt with through its appeal procedure. This may occur in the case of a candidate who is unsuccessful in a closed competition or of a civil servant whose opportunity for advancement has been adversely affected because no competition was held^{1/} or of an employee who is considered incompetent or incapable of performing his duties and who is demoted or released.^{2/}

Until the Civil Service Commission, with the approval of the Governor General in Council, adopts new regulations covering appeals we can only deal with this subject in the light of the present legislation.

The Commission, as soon as an appeal has been registered, appoints an Appeal Board consisting of three persons nominated by the Commission. This board conducts an inquiry and submits a report with its recommendations to the Commission. The Commission is not bound by these recommendations and remains free to amend or reject them.^{3/}

Postal employees presented several objections. Even in the context of

^{1/} Bill C-181, section 21.

^{2/} Bill C-181, section 31.

^{3/} Civil Service Act, sections 27, 56 and 70.

Bill C-181 (Public Service Employment Act) some of these objections remain serious and valid.

(1) The first deals with the composition of Appeal Boards.

The Commission used to select one of its own officers as Chairman, and as members two senior civil servants employed at the national, regional or local level in departments other than the department directly concerned. Recently, it amended its policy and decided that it would no longer call on the services of these civil servants and thus would eliminate suspicions, entertained by employees, which reflected on the absolute impartiality of these boards.

In our considered opinion the Civil Service Commission should go one step further and, in case of an appeal by a postal employee who has been demoted or is being released, appoint to the board one person nominated by the staff organization to which the employee belongs and one by the Department.

We have no doubt whatsoever that this is the best procedure in such cases. A demotion, and especially a dismissal, has serious consequences. It seems to be not only reasonable but essential for an employee, who considers himself neither incompetent nor incapable of performing his duties and who wishes to exercise his right of appeal, to have the satisfaction of being judged by at least one of his peers. In any case, if the Civil Service Commission did take such action, its Appeal Boards would, in future, be constituted almost in the same manner as the adjudication boards mentioned in Bill C-170 (Public Service Staff Relations Act).^{1/}

With regards to an appeal by an unsuccessful candidate in a promotion competition, the Civil Service Commission could very well follow the same procedure every time the appellant so wishes. Failing this, there should be no objection,

^{1/} Section 93.

in principle, to having the staff organization, to which the employee belongs, appoint an observer.^{1/}

(2) When the Civil Service Commission decides to reject or modify the recommendations of an Appeal Board in favour of the appellant, it comes to this decision, except under exceptional circumstances, without calling together the interested parties and without hearing them or even inviting them to present their viewpoints.^{2/}

This procedure is all the more surprising since, in most cases, the Civil Service Commission does not have a complete transcript of the evidence.

Such a procedure should not be followed under any circumstances. The difficulties and expenses involved in such a review must give way to such a basic principle of justice. Otherwise, it might be better to grant Appeal Boards final jurisdiction.

(3) The Civil Service Act authorizes the Civil Service Commission, before coming to a decision, to obtain all additional information it requires.

We are not questioning this right but we do not think that it should exercise it without the interested parties being informed and being allowed to express their opinion.

(4) We were told that some Appeal Boards do not allow the employee's representative to examine the personal file of the employee.

We consider this attitude unacceptable. If an employee decides to request the help of any person to investigate and hear his appeal, surely this

^{1/} The presence of an observer would serve to reassure both the appellant and the staff organization and would probably put an end to criticism against the partiality of the Appeal Boards.

^{2/} Obviously, there have been no complaints about decisions where the Commission mitigates these recommendations in favour of the appellant.

decision implies that this employee authorizes, tacitly at least, his representative to examine the contents of his personal file.

(5) Section 49 of the Civil Service Act does not allow a new employee on probation to appeal against the decision of a deputy head to reject him. We think that in the case of rejection, there is no justification for such a distinction between a full-time employee and a new employee on probation.

WE RECOMMEND:

133. That, when a postal employee who is demoted or dismissed submits an appeal, the Civil Service Commission appoint to the Appeal Board one person nominated by the staff organization to which the employee belongs and one by the Department.
134. That the same procedure apply in an appeal by a candidate not promoted, every time an employee so requests or, failing this, that the Civil Service Commission agree to the presence of an observer selected by such an organization as long as there is no objection from the appellant.
135. That, in future, the Civil Service Commission should not decide to reject or amend the recommendations made by an Appeal Board without inviting the interested parties, including the Department, to submit their viewpoints, and without hearing them, unless they themselves decline to do so.
136. That a person selected by the employee to represent him before an Appeal Board be allowed to examine the personal file of this employee.
137. That section 49 of the Civil Service Act or section 28(3) of Bill C-181 (if necessary) be amended to allow a new employee on probation to appeal against the decision of a deputy head to reject him.

CHAPTER 19

INVESTIGATIONS

The Post Office Act^{1/} provides that "The Postmaster General may at any time designate an officer employed in the Canada Post Office to investigate and report upon the state and management of the business, or any part of the business, of the Canada Post Office, and the conduct of any postal employee or mail contractor as far as it relates to his official duties".

Accordingly the Department has established a full-time investigation service, as it had the right to do. In some localities, however, the ways and methods of some investigators were criticized. It was alleged that threats or promises are made to obtain oral or written statements from employees.

Headquarters denied these allegations and claimed to know nothing of such incidents. We could not spare the time to investigate each one of them.

Headquarters made available a "Manual of Information for Investigators". Having perused it we must admit, in all fairness, that the Department was careful in taking the necessary precautions when writing its directives for investigators. Hence we must conclude that any abuse is caused by a few over-zealous investigators against whom, we are convinced, Headquarters would not have hesitated to deal severely if they had become aware of the situation and had been provided with sufficient evidence. Our recommendation below will help to obtain such evidence, should it become necessary.

^{1/} Section 46.

Headquarters must attach great importance to the possible consequences of the conduct of its investigators. The latter work generally under tension and the least blunder may well create a feeling of fear, dissatisfaction or, even worse, resentment. Such an atmosphere, once created, may remain for a long time and, rightly or wrongly, may grow worse and permeate to other matters unrelated to investigation.

But this is not our sole concern. We are also interested in the case of the employee who commits or is suspected of having committed an act which, under the Criminal Code or the Post Office Act, constitutes "an indictable offence" or "an offence" which makes him liable, upon conviction, to imprisonment or to a fine or to both, leading generally to the dismissal of the employee.

After all, when the departmental investigators are interrogating an employee they do not know at that time whether the offence he is suspected of will warrant dismissal or a complaint before the court.

WE RECOMMEND:

138. That, in future, any postal employee being interrogated by one or more departmental investigators be entitled to demand the presence either of a representative of the staff organization of which he is a member or of a lawyer.

CHAPTER 20

OBSERVATION GALLERIES

Observation galleries are part of the construction of almost all Staff Post Offices. It is possible that, in future, they will be included only in post offices with a proposed minimum establishment of 20 employees.

Although the Department recognizes that the majority of employees are honest, it maintains that these galleries provide the only effective means of control in exceptional cases where a postal employee is suspected of committing or of having committed one or more acts endangering the security of the mail.

The Department insists that the galleries serve only this one single purpose, stating that they are used only by its investigators in the performance of their official duties. No postmaster or any member of his staff has the right, under any circumstances, to use these galleries to supervise employees or to check their work or conduct.

Nevertheless, several employees have strongly objected to these galleries, some because the galleries seem to be opposed to the natural respect for human freedom and dignity or because, by their very existence, they create a feeling of fear or suspicion; others because they do not believe that Headquarters' instructions on restricted use of the galleries are observed.

Even if it is true that these galleries are most objectionable at first sight, we must admit that they are being used in the United States, England, Australia, and elsewhere. No one seems to have been able to devise or work out a more adequate method of control.

We should mention that the Department experimented with closed circuit television in Peterborough, Ont., but this system was not found satisfactory from either standpoint of investigation or operation.

Consequently we do not believe we should intervene.

Perhaps the Department might consider the construction of observation galleries in the future only in post offices with a proposed establishment of non-supervisory operating staff of approximately 50 employees rather than a minimum of 20 as proposed.

WE RECOMMEND:

139. That the Department issue further instructions emphasizing the restricted use of the observation galleries.

We suggest that the Department notify postmasters that they will be subject to disciplinary action if they do not comply with these instructions or if they tolerate anyone under their jurisdiction to contravene them.

CHAPTER 21

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Section 61 of the Civil Service Act forbids any person employed in the Civil Service to engage in "partisan work in connection with any election for the election of a member of the House of Commons, a member of the legislature of a province or a member of the Council of the Yukon Territory or the Northwest Territories".

Any person who violates this provision is subject to dismissal.

Postal employees claim that this restriction is unreasonable and contrary to the freedom of opinion and expression recognized in Canada, even if it is true that this restriction applies only during election time.

It is not our responsibility to discuss this question except as it applies to the non-supervisory operating staff in the Post Office Department.

These employees are in no way concerned with the development of major departmental policies and their work has no political connotation. Moreover, the distinction made between what is not allowed during an election period and what seems to be tolerated at other times appears vague and unacceptable. To the best of our knowledge at least one province to date, namely Saskatchewan, has abolished, with a few exceptions, all restrictions on "partisan work" by its employees.^{1/}

^{1/} This also seems to be the case in the United Kingdom.

Section 61 also decrees that a civil servant cannot "contribute, receive or in any way deal with any money for the funds of any political party".^{1/}

WE RECOMMEND:

140. That, by means of one or more amendments, Parliament grant non-supervisory operating employees in the Post Office Department the right to engage in "partisan work" in connection with any party or to engage in work for or against a candidate (or on his own behalf) for election as a member of the House of Commons, a member of the legislature of a province or a member of the Council of the Yukon or the Northwest Territories, all these activities taking place, of course, outside the employees' working hours.
141. That, by one or more amendments, Parliament allow these same employees, during their off duty hours, to contribute, receive or in any way deal with any money for the funds of a candidate or of any political party.

Logically, following these recommendations we have to consider another request made by postal employees: their eligibility to the House of Commons.

The Canada Elections Act debars every person accepting or holding any employment, permanent or temporary, in the service of the Government of Canada, to which any salary, wages, or emolument is attached, from standing as a candidate in a federal election.^{2/}

In the case in question and for reasons already stated, this provision seems too restrictive. We fail to see how the interests of the postal service would be endangered if a few postal employees stood as candidates in an election.

It should be pointed out that the Civil Service Regulations authorize a deputy head to grant to an employee, seeking election to a full-time municipal office, leave without pay for a period of thirty days and, if elected, leave without pay for the term of office.^{3/}

^{1/} These two provisions, expressed in different but more precise terms, are also found in Bill C-181. (Public Service Employment Act), section 32.

^{2/} R.S. 1960, c 39, section 20 (1) (f).

^{3/} Section 71.

Acting as a member of the House of Commons or of a provincial legislative assembly deserves even more consideration than acting as a civic official even if we have to recognize that, once elected, a postal employee has to resign.

WE RECOMMEND:

142. That, by means of one or more amendments, Parliament grant the non-supervisory operating staff in the Post Office Department the right to stand as candidates in federal elections (general or by-elections) or in provincial elections (general or by-elections).
143. That in order to run as a candidate and during the election itself, any non-supervisory operating employee be entitled to leave without pay for a reasonable length of time, with due consideration being given to the geographical location of the electoral riding in which he wishes to be a candidate.
144. That if this employee fails to be selected as a candidate or fails to get elected, he be allowed, during the following eight days, to be reinstated without losing any of his rights or privileges as a civil servant.
145. That if elected, he be required to resign immediately.

These last recommendations do not go much further than the privileges already granted government employees of the provinces of Ontario, Quebec and Saskatchewan.

CHAPTER 22

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Almost everywhere, employees mentioned the need for a better training and development program not only for themselves but also for supervisory personnel.

Evidently insufficient on-the-job induction training by specialists can seriously affect

- a) the quality and quantity of output,
- b) labour mobility,
- c) morale,^{1/}
- d) the incidence of accidents, and
- e) the number of grievances.

The 1964-1965 budget provided a total of \$243,600 for expenditures in the training and development field, e.g., salaries, travel expenses for courses and conferences, equipment, instructions, etc., and all but \$16,500 was used. In 1965-1966 the sum of \$109,298 was left unspent out of a total authorized budget of \$398,575. We feel this is a very small proportion of the total budget of such a large Department.^{2/}

The Department, while admitting that there were many gaps to be filled, thought it should outline to the Commission its past activities in this field, the difficulties encountered, and its future plans.

^{1/} The more inexperienced or poorly trained an employee, the greater the risk of his becoming a burden to his fellow-workers either because of his frequent mistakes or because of the lost time.

^{2/} Total budget for 1965-66 was \$279 million.

We would be remiss in our duty if we did not attempt to summarize the departmental position. At the same time, this will provide information for employees who obviously know very little of the policies of their employer in this field.

(1) From 1946 to 1956, the Post Office Department, as in many other departments and in industry in general, concentrated on a series of training courses called "J courses": Job Instruction, Job Methods, Job Relations, Job Safety and other "composite" programs such as daily work simplification. These courses had already proved their usefulness and had been effective in the rapid training of large numbers of workers who were employed, on rather short notice, in every type of industry connected with the war effort.

More than one supervisor took these courses and became initiated in instructional methods adapted to the postal service, work simplification methods and even basic techniques of man management. The Department claims that it has been just as eager to keep up with the progress made in the fields of behavioural and social sciences and that it has been attempting to determine the factors which will best motivate the employees and encourage them to improve their knowledge.

(2) Sometime later (1959 to 1961), while still proceeding cautiously, the Department included some new teaching methods in its training program on "Management Skills", e.g., case studies, role-playing exercises, simulations, etc. These more advanced courses were given in only four large districts and only to middle management and some personnel officers. They were aimed mainly at creating an environment which would facilitate experimentation and the testing of new behavioural patterns and new methods of motivation in concrete situations.

(3) However, the Department quickly realized that without highly skilled, professional training staff and without the essential equipment, both at

Headquarters and in the field, these methods and new training techniques could not be applied effectively.

The Department began by raising its selection standards for the recruitment of staff training officers. It hopes to attract experienced and competent people with a university background. In regard to its present training staff, it has tried to advance those who seem best qualified to a level where they can successfully use modern training material, contribute to research, and carry out programs of manpower and organization planning, as well as employee evaluation, development and training.

The Department is not deceiving itself. The task it has undertaken is not easy. The Post Office, like several other departments and a good part of industry, is at the moment experiencing the after-effects of a serious lack of professionally qualified training specialists. This shortage is largely the result of the spectacular progress caused by the behavioural and social sciences in the field of education and training. Neither the educational systems, as a whole, nor the careers offered in the Civil Service, until now, have proved interesting enough to entice a sufficient number of candidates to train for this profession or to attract many people with the required basic education and qualifications.

The Department hopes that the new plan adopted by the Civil Service Commission, for the classification of Personnel Administrators, will overcome these difficulties and will attract enough specialists to be able to put its plans into effect.

Such is the long-term plan of the Department. It appears to be interesting and valid.

WE RECOMMEND:

146. That the Department make every possible effort to obtain the qualified staff required to carry out its training and development program.

Meanwhile, the Department is faced with urgent requirements. We will mention only some of the most important ones and make a few recommendations.

(1) A local inquiry into the actions and conduct of some supervisors is necessary in several post offices. The employees, as we have already said, complained on many occasions of their arrogant attitude and their prejudices. Some postmasters appear not to have paid attention to this problem.^{1/}

WE RECOMMEND:

147. That local joint committees be entitled to submit for study and consideration all problems that may be created by the actions, behaviour or attitude of the supervisors.

148. That top priority be given to courses in human relations for supervisors.

(2) The Department can more readily meet the need for technical training of mail sorters. This requires on the part of the training staff a sound background and teaching ability. There are now sorting schools in all major post offices. The Department intends to provide, before the end of the fiscal year 1966-1967, the same training in staff post offices of all levels.

(3) The induction and follow-up training of new employees was mentioned quite often.

In future, the Department will rely on the training services provided for in its new program. Until then, the Department intends to maintain its specialized schools in localities where they are at present^{2/} and to continue at

^{1/} In October 1965, the Department published a manual on supervisory training dealing mostly with the nature and character of human relations which should exist between supervisors and employees.

^{2/} The Department claims that, because of these specialized schools, it has succeeded in reducing substantially the time required to train new employees and in obtaining a better output in a much shorter time.

other locations to call on supervisors to give newcomers on-the-job training.

To help the newcomers and to make them aware of their rights, obligations, and privileges, the Department now provides them with two booklets: "You and the Postal Service" and "Your Superannuation Plan".^{1/} Letter carriers receive a "Manual of Instructions" as well. In the major post offices, it has become the custom to call a meeting of employees to discuss the contents of these booklets. The lack of training staff, however, has prevented holding such sessions immediately after the employee has joined the service. With more training staff and better equipment, the Department hopes to do much better. Its new program provides for official induction courses and technical training for all newcomers for as long as it is necessary to ensure that they become efficient. With this object in mind, the Department intends to assign a full-time instructor to each staff post office.

(4) In all large enterprises one is concerned with the problems of rotation of staff within or between sections. The Department claims this is also the case in the Post Office.

In small offices job rotation is the rule. This is essential since the small number of employees must carry out all duties.

In larger offices, rotation presents difficulties because of the extensive specialized knowledge required in the city and forward mail sections. The period of apprenticeship to reach an acceptable standard of productivity limits this rotation to large distribution zones. In these offices, moreover, employment as wicket clerks and directory clerks, etc., is considered a "preferred assignment" and is open to bidding on the basis of seniority. This can only detract from a well organized rotation program.

The Department assured our Commission that it wants to further strengthen its rotation policy to meet the needs of staff mobility and to give the employees

^{1/} We are surprised that many employees claimed they had never even seen those booklets.

greater experience. It cannot achieve this objective, however, without the co-operation of the staff organizations which, if they are to accede to the suggestions of a good number of employees, will have to be more flexible regarding seniority rules in respect to "preferred assignments".

Nevertheless, we are concerned with one aspect.

Several factors are taken into consideration in a rotation program. Having told employees of its intention to strengthen its rotation policy, while modifying it slightly with the agreement of the staff organizations, the Department should ask those who have the desire and ambition to improve themselves to place their names on a special list. Without disregarding completely the merit principle, the Department would have a wider choice and the employees would also have the benefit of an excellent incentive.

WE RECOMMEND:

149. That the Department revise its selection practices in the rotation of staff within the same section or between sections after consultation at the national joint committee level.

(5) The Department has initiated an appraisal program for employees at all levels. One of the aims of this program is to allow the Department to identify the most promising employees. Circumstances have prevented the Department, until now, from extending this program to non-supervisory operating personnel.

WE RECOMMEND:

150. That the appraisal and performance review program instituted by the Department be applied, as soon as possible, to non-supervisory operating personnel to identify their true potential and to meet their training and production needs.

(6) In larger post offices, where mailhandling is done through the extensive use of mechanical equipment (conveyor belts, deflectors, parcel sorting

machines, etc.), employees concerned receive special training on the current methods developed by the Methods and Standards Division, and so learn to make the most effective use of this equipment.

(7) French language courses came up for discussion.

The Civil Service Commission has determined the general criteria, which are summarized as follows:

There are no restrictions as to who may attend these courses except that preference will be given to Senior Officers, officers in key positions, personnel in clerical positions who have an actual need for this type of training, personnel who have already followed a concentrated language course and who should keep alive and increase their knowledge of the French language, and finally personnel whose ear is not tuned to oral French but who have an acceptable level of reading comprehension, and who are thus on the threshold of becoming bilingual.

The Department adheres to these criteria in recommending French language courses for its Headquarters staff in Ottawa. As the Civil Service Commission extends these courses to other centres, the Department intends to follow suit. Most offices have enough space and the necessary equipment (blackboards, conference room, furniture, etc.). Overhead and movie projectors are available within the Department and other equipment can be obtained if needed.

(8) Some postal clerks asked that a manual be prepared exclusively for their use. The Department states that, unlike the letter carrier's, the duties of a postal clerk are not always the same and vary from one area to another. Nevertheless, we feel that such a manual would be of benefit to the Department. Some basic duties do not change and policies or basic rules hardly ever change.

WE RECOMMEND:

151. That the Department prepare a loose leaf induction kit for its employees setting out their main conditions of employment as well as their duties and responsibilities.
152. That this kit be kept up to date.

CHAPTER 23

DIRECTIVES AND INSTRUCTIONS

The field operating services of the Department can function effectively only through the publication of many different regulations, directives and instructions.

There were two recurring complaints:

- a) the difficulty of understanding them, and
- b) their wrong or contradictory interpretations.

(1) The Department rightly maintains that an organization such as the Post Office, guided by a progressive decentralization policy, cannot avoid all differences of interpretation or of application of its large number of rules and regulations. This is obviously not possible nor desirable. If the Department always issued precise instructions about the smallest details of its policies or procedures, there would be little room left for adaptation to local conditions. Our Inquiry has proved the need for such flexibility in each district. District directors, postmasters and all others in authority in the field operating services should be given the opportunity to exercise their autonomy, initiative, and common sense. Nothing will be gained from a lack of flexibility.

Nevertheless, greater accuracy is essential if the Department wants to prevent its regulations from becoming completely unintelligible. As a matter of fact, it is aware of this problem and is doing something about it. A Directives Management Unit has been established to ensure uniformity of

style and content in its regulations, directives and instructions and to see that they are issued in a standard format with an appropriate reference index.

For the time being, Headquarters officials and Quality Control Division representatives check the interpretation and application of instructions, during their on-the-spot inspections. It seems that Headquarters wants to correct, as soon as possible, errors or misinterpretations which are brought to their attention.

In any case, the new grievance procedure will undoubtedly put an end to the difficulties and troubles of the past, especially if the Department agrees to our recommendation to consider referring to final and compulsory arbitration any disagreement about the interpretation or application of its regulations.^{1/}

(2) The Department often consults with its district directors and postmasters of post offices class 17, 18 and 19 before amending procedures or revising its work methods. This is done by correspondence or by personal visits. It holds an annual conference in Ottawa for the most senior field representatives. During these meetings, there is a complete review of the main problems facing the Department. The Department also states district directors discuss with the postmasters in their respective areas all regulations, directives or instructions which are of interest to them and proposed amendments to existing policies.

We support this policy.

As already mentioned, we would like the Department to go one step further and agree to consult, in future, with the national leaders of the staff organizations before enforcing regulations, directives or instructions affecting the employees' working conditions.^{2/}

^{1/} See Chapter 17, "Grievance Procedure".

^{2/} See Chapter 6, "Consultation".

(3) In many places, employees criticized the expression "at the discretion of the postmaster" used in departmental directives and in the Personnel Manual. They consider it has a demoralizing effect because it allows the postmaster too much freedom of action.

We did study each directive or article in the Personnel Manual where this expression is used. Perhaps it is unnecessary in some cases but we cannot see it deleted entirely without creating much more complex problems. For example, when there is an exceptionally heavy snow storm, who will decide that the letter carriers will not deliver the mail if the postmaster does not have complete discretion? Or again who would have the last word about the type and extent of the postal service required on a statutory holiday in a particular locality? After all, there comes a time when someone in authority must make a final decision.

(4) On the other hand, some employees suggested that directives from Headquarters be rewritten or revised by the district directors, bearing in mind their adaptation and application to local or regional conditions. The Department states that district directors have full authority to interpret directives or issue new ones according to the particular requirements of their district providing they do not lose sight of the basic intent.

(5) A few local branches requested that the Post Office Act (1951) be brought up to date in line with recent changes.

This Act has been amended several times since 1951 and continues to be reviewed periodically. As the responsibility for amending the Act rests with Parliament, we suggest that the staff organizations specify what amendments they consider desirable so that the Department may study them and advise the appropriate authorities.

(6) Other branches complained that they do not have a copy of the Personnel Manual at their disposal.

The Department believes that it has satisfied all requests received. The national officers of the staff organizations and the representatives of local branches have at least one copy each and receive all amendments regularly. The Department states it is ready to consider any other requests and distribute more copies within reason.

(7) Employees claim that not all postal officers are sufficiently conversant with the contents of the Personnel Manual and the Manual of Operating Procedures.

The Department considers that much of the contents of these manuals is devoted to details of procedure of interest only to personnel specialists and section heads directly involved in the operating services. A profound knowledge of these manuals cannot be expected from all postal officers. The Department prefers to have these manuals always available to these officers for consultation, as the need arises.

The Department should remind those officials of their responsibilities when their duties require them to have a good knowledge of the contents of either one of these manuals. It would not be realistic to ask for more.

(8) Some wicket clerks insisted that, in each post office, there should be two manuals on the handling of registered mail: one containing the general instructions of the Department and the other precise local instructions on the method for dealing with registered mail and its handling locally.

The Department has no objection but leaves this initiative to the postmasters who may after consultation decide what action to take on the basis of local requirements.

(9) Some letter carriers complained that they are sometimes required to provide catalogue mailers with up-to-date listings of patrons' addresses - and this, they say, contrary to regulations.^{1/}

^{1/} Post Office Department, Manual of Instructions to Letter Carriers, Book 8, section 83.

The Department states that this regulation applies to cases where private individuals or bill collectors ask for information of a confidential nature. It does not, in any way, forbid letter carriers to provide these listings to firms wanting to distribute their catalogues. The Department believes this service is useful from the point of view of the patrons, the Department, and the letter carriers themselves who help provide this service.

(10) Some letter carriers alleged that, on appointment, they are given only two days, at the most, to read their Manual of Instructions.

Although the letter carrier must sign a declaration that he has received, read carefully, and understood these instructions, the Department points out that he is always free to review, with his supervisor, any part of the manual which he does not understand. As a further precaution, the postmaster or his representative must sign a declaration stating that he has discussed the instructions with the letter carrier and is satisfied that the latter is conversant with the contents of the manual. The Department has never required that all instructions be understood in two days.

(11) The railway mail clerks asked that their 1955 Manual of Instructions be brought up to date. Although admitting that the latest edition dates back to 1955, the Department has not considered it necessary to publish a new edition in view of the small number of amendments involved. It is now studying the possibility of publishing a new one shortly.

WE RECOMMEND:

153. That the Department use its Directives Management Unit to ensure that its regulations, directives, and instructions are complete, easy to understand and accompanied by an index with appropriate references.
154. That the Department consult with the national joint committees before issuing or amending regulations affecting the employees' conditions of work.
155. That the staff organizations make specific recommendations about the sections of the Post Office Act, the manuals, the regulations, the directives, or instructions which, in their opinion, should be amended or clarified.

CHAPTER 24

ENVIRONMENTAL AND PHYSICAL WORKING CONDITIONS

1. General

This chapter deals with a problem of paramount importance. Its solution is both difficult and complex.

Most of the representatives from local branches submitted grievances covering many different aspects of environmental and physical working conditions in offices where the employees carry out their duties.^{1/}

On the whole, these grievances are related to matters of health, hygiene, safety or welfare.^{2/} These can be considered as "perennial" grievances: the employee who hates the room where he eats his meal, because he finds it either too small, uncomfortable or even dirty, "rediscovers" it day in and day out, as long as nothing is done to correct what he, rightly or wrongly, considers shocking, rediscovers his dissatisfaction ... and his grievance.^{3/} Inevitably several of these grievances are subjective in character. It happens that an employee or a group of employees complain about certain conditions while another employee or a group of employees may be completely unconcerned. The diversity of impressions or opinions taken separately only increases the number of grievances.

^{1/} The word "offices" includes large and small staff post offices, postal stations and even railway mail cars.

^{2/} Details are given in different sections of this chapter.

^{3/} We deliberately chose a simple example. The association of an employee's grievance with his daily work remains, be it a lack of ventilation, defective lighting, inadequate heating, an accident hazard, a lavatory out of order, etc.

It goes without saying that the Department is concerned over this flood of complaints. It appreciates that they affect the morale and behaviour of the employees and that it runs the risk of a deterioration in its relations with the staff organizations. Aware of its responsibilities, the Department knows that it is facing difficulties which, if they persist, can only reduce the efficiency of the postal service.

But there are complications.

To have a better understanding of all the implications we have grouped these problems under three headings:

- (1) Standards of environmental and physical working conditions.
- (2) The implementation of these standards.
- (3) The division of authority and responsibilities between the Post Office and the Department of Public Works.^{1/}

Standards of environmental and physical working conditions

There are at present a certain number of rules and standards governing design, maintenance and use of accommodation for civil servants. They cover a very wide range of subjects including security and safety, sanitary facilities, the cleanliness of the place of work, the comfort and welfare of the employees, etc. These rules and standards, obviously, apply to the Post Office Department and employees have a right to expect that they will be complied with in their case as for all other civil servants.

In developing these standards, it was necessary to call on the knowledge of experts and the experience of many agencies. Thus, standards laid down in the

^{1/} We do not claim to have covered all problems under these three headings. We are mentioning only the essential ones.

National Building Code govern both the design and construction of new buildings as well as the renovation of existing ones. Lighting is as recommended by the Society of Illuminating Engineers. The Dominion Fire Commissioner is responsible for directives intended for the protection of employees and buildings against fire. The Occupational Health Division of the Department of National Health and Welfare looks after every item which may affect the health of civil servants while at work. The Department of Public Works lays down the policies regarding maintenance, cleaning, etc.

We do not have to assess the intrinsic value of these rules and standards. However, we are surprised that, until now, the Government has not seen fit to have them completely written up and codified.

A committee of the National Joint Council, which includes official representatives of various civil service associations, thoroughly studied this problem and has submitted to the Government a report containing specific recommendations for improving present standards. We trust that the Government will act on these recommendations very soon.

For its part, the Department of Public Works is now preparing a manual of standards governing physical working conditions. This manual will be published in sections and will be made available not only to departmental administrators concerned but also to the representatives of the civil service staff associations and unions.

It is also intended to form a committee to advise Treasury Board in this particular field. This committee will be composed of representatives from Treasury Board, the Department of Public Works, the Department of National Health and Welfare, the Department of Labour, and a few others.

Finally we have Bill S-35 (Canada Labour Safety Code) on work safety which contains several encouraging provisions, such as section 7 allowing the

Governor in Council to make "regulations for the safety and health of persons employed upon or in connection with the operation of any federal work, undertaking or business"^{1/}.

These certainly are steps in the right direction. All these measures, if well co-ordinated, can only improve the lot of civil servants as a whole and Post Office employees in particular.

The implementation of standards

It appears evident that the implementation of the present standards has often left much to be desired.

If the number of recriminations is to be reduced and relations between the Department and its employees improved, it is, in the first place, necessary to increase the participation of employees in the maintenance of adequate physical and environmental working conditions in each staff post office. The Department has everything to gain in inviting its employees, through their representatives, to play an active role in this matter. This is the basic reason for many of the recommendations we make further on and which are related to those in Chapter 6 of our Report.^{2/}

It seems to us that the most promising solution is to set up local joint committees where the employer and employees meet at regular intervals to discuss

^{1/} This section includes some interesting details. Besides the possibility of a regulation for the provision of safety measures in the operation or use of machinery, equipment, materials, etc., it gives authority to the Governor in Council to make regulations respecting (a) the use, operation and maintenance of escalators, elevators and other devices for moving passengers or freight; (b) the ventilation, lighting and temperature of places of employment and prescribing the minimum amount of space for employees; (c) the provision and maintenance of potable water supplies and of sanitary and other facilities for the well-being of employees; (d) the handling, transportation, storage and use of substances or devices dangerous to the safety or health of employees; (e) the protection of employees from fire and explosion; (f) the reporting and investigation of accidents and hazards; (g) the adoption and implementation of appropriate safety codes, etc.

^{2/} Chapter 6, "Consultation".

problems of health, hygiene, safety or welfare in their particular post office. It will facilitate discussion on an equal footing and will help employees to know and understand, if not accept, certain inherent difficulties in the established system. These committees will study rules and standards and see that they are implemented. They will bring pressure to bear on the implementation of their recommendations. If necessary, they will be able to refer some of these recommendations to the national level and thus bring about worthwhile modifications.

We cannot overemphasize our confidence in the success of such a formula, providing - and we repeat this - that both parties exercise a spirit of complete co-operation.

Here again, Bill S-35 (Canada Labour [Safety] Code) may prove very beneficial. It provides a new and important element: that of an effective control on the implementation of the regulations on safety, health and others which will be approved by the Governor in Council. Section 10 of this Bill anticipates the appointment of regional safety officers with very wide powers, e.g., the authority to make inspections, enquiries or on the spot investigations to ensure that the regulations are followed and, where necessary, to institute proceedings. As soon as this Bill has been approved and the Governor in Council has promulgated the appropriate regulations and has appointed safety officers, post office employees will be able to turn to someone in authority to investigate, on the spot, most of the physical and environmental working conditions.

The division of authority and responsibilities

The division of authority and of some responsibilities between the Post Office and some other departments and, more particularly, the Department of Public Works, also gives rise to difficulties. We give examples further on.

Let us point out for now that the three main agencies concerned, i.e., the Post Office, the Department of Public Works, and Treasury Board, recently decided

to undertake a detailed study of ways and means to delegate to the Department further authority regarding new construction and the maintenance of the post offices, and for equipment and furniture.

Furthermore, the Department of Public Works has just undertaken a large-scale decentralization program so that it will be a "service" agency rather than a controlling body as before. This change of policy should bring about excellent results and put an end to a good number of grievances. In time, the employees of the post office will cease to have the feeling that the Department to which they belong and which has sole jurisdiction over them is not capable of resolving all their difficulties.

Let us consider now in the various sections of this chapter each of the main specific problems employees have raised.

2. Accidents

Of all the Government departments, boards or crown agencies, the Post Office Department ranks next to the Department of National Defence in having the highest number of accidents at work.^{1/}

During the fiscal year 1964-1965, the Post Office Department recorded 1,928 accidents which were termed minor and 1,983 which caused employees disability of different degrees of seriousness and duration. The claims settled during these 12 months totalled 3,990 at the cost of \$542,000.00.^{2/}

(1) We were astonished at the ignorance and uncertainty of employees concerning their rights and privileges when an accident occurs at work.

The Department intends to distribute, as soon as possible, an explanatory pamphlet giving information about the Government Employees Compensation Act^{3/} and

^{1/} The frequency rate per million man-hour is higher in the Post Office Department. According to the most recent statistics, this rate was 36.87% whereas in the Department of National Defence (Air) it was 24.58%.

^{2/} A little more than 65% of the accidents happened to letter carriers.

^{3/} R.S., 1952, c. 134, as amended.

the Workmen's Compensation Act of the province in which they are employed.

We presume that this pamphlet will refer to section 77 of the Civil Service Regulations which allows an employee, injured in the performance of his duties or suffering from an illness resulting from the nature of his employment, to obtain special leave (quite apart from sick leave) at full salary for the duration of his total disability. Thus, a civil servant receives more compensation than he could receive under provincial legislation.

WE RECOMMEND:

156. That the Department supply its employees with all information necessary to enable them to understand clearly the rights and privileges they may exercise and the claims they may make in cases of accidents on duty; this information to take into account the Government Employees Compensation Act and the Civil Service Regulations as well as the Workmen's Compensation Act of the province in which they are employed.

(2) Employees state that the Department gives them a copy of the accident report only on request to the postmaster.

The Department claims that this practice is satisfactory. We do not agree. We believe that an employee who has been the victim of an accident is entitled to receive all information which may help him, at any time, to present his claim.

WE RECOMMEND:

157. That, automatically, and without being specifically requested, the Department forward to an employee who has been the victim of an accident, any report which it prepares for the intention of a provincial Workmen's Compensation Board or for the federal Department of Labour.

(3) From time to time the provincial Workmen's Compensation Boards publish notices containing information or advice. These notices are intended to be posted in working establishments.

Until now, the Department has shown very little interest in these notices. It intends to change its attitude and to make greater use of them. It wants also to make better use of the services provided by several of these provincial boards. We discuss this matter again further on in this chapter.

(4) Letter carriers suggested that the Department recognize as occupational or industrial diseases certain illnesses from which many of them suffer, such as intestinal disorders and heart diseases.

Under existing legislation, the Post Office Department does not have the power to decree on its own authority whether any illness belongs to one or the other of these categories. This matter comes under provincial jurisdiction.

It might be possible for letter carriers to have these illnesses or others accepted as "occupational" diseases if they exercise their right referred to in section 7 of the Government Employees Compensation Act which reads as follows:

"The Governor in Council may make regulations prescribing the conditions under which compensation is to be payable, the amount of compensation payable and the manner in which the compensation is to be determined, in respect of any employee who is disabled or whose death is caused by reason of any disease that is not an industrial disease but is due to the nature of his employment and peculiar to or characteristic of the particular process, trade or occupation in which he was employed at the time the disease was contracted, and compensation shall be awarded to such employee or to the dependents of such deceased employee in accordance with the regulations."

Perhaps the letter carriers, if they carry out all the necessary research, will succeed in persuading the Governor in Council to approve the proposed regulation. The Department, on the other hand, might make a study of the occurrence of these illnesses with respect to letter carriers and make the results available to them. Furthermore, without awaiting official representations from the Letter Carriers' Union, it would be desirable if the Department of National Health and Welfare would concern itself with this problem.

We can go no further. Neither our elementary medical knowledge, nor the

somewhat vague information received, allow us to support this suggestion of the letter carriers and to make it a formal recommendation.

3. Safety programs

We shall not attempt to list the multitude of complaints on the safety of the staff or on the elimination of accident hazards.

We were not able to check everything but we have to admit that some post offices, postal stations or railway mail cars left rather distressing im-
pressions.^{1/} Whatever the reasons may be, the Department - and it must assume this responsibility with respect to its employees - was too often unconcerned if not negligent. The Department recognized its duty to correct several deficiencies. The proposed changes in its safety policy are a good indication.

As a first long-range measure, the Department intends to appoint im-
mediately a safety officer who will have the following duties:

- "1.- To administer, prepare and promote an accident prevention program for the Postal Service;
- 2.- To assess, in co-operation with Headquarters and Field Officers, specific safety training needs in order to prepare appropriate training programs;
- 3.- To prepare appropriate posters, publications and manuals for safety programs;
- 4.- To carry out safety and accident prevention studies in order to submit regular reports on the status of safety by inspecting various existing facilities, by conferences with the District Directors and with the Advisor of the Department of Labour, and by analysis of reports, charts and statistics;
- 5.- To act in an advisory capacity as required on all matters pertaining to safety and to assess new developments in industrial safety procedures particularly as to their applicability to the Department's operations;

^{1/} These impressions do not relate solely to accident hazards. They have several other causes which we shall have the opportunity to discuss in the following sections of this chapter.

- 6.- To maintain the accident record system, by submitting necessary reports, investigating serious accidents, obtaining supervisor's accident reports and checking corrective action taken by supervisors to eliminate accident causes;
- 7.- To maintain liaison with outside professional organizations, Workmen's Compensation Boards and Staff Training Officers in order to exchange information and to keep programs up to date;
- 8.- To develop a preventive safety program by recommending the purchase of proper equipment, establishing most common causes of injuries and taking appropriate actions;
- 9.- To initiate activities that will stimulate and maintain employee interests;
- 10.- To set standards for safety equipment to be used by staff personnel."^{1/}

A second measure which the Department intends to take and which has long been delayed despite numerous representations by the Union of Postal Workers refers to the organization and establishment of nursing services and first-aid units in major staff post offices.^{2/}

A third measure mentioned by the Department is a study undertaken by the authorities on the adoption of uniform criteria concerning the health and safety of civil servants as a whole. This study has reached the stage of "serious consideration".^{3/} We believe that they should go beyond this stage now. Postal employees have the right to claim and to obtain the application of standards of health, safety and hygiene similar to those applied in industry.

However, there is a need for even more urgent action.

^{1/} This text is taken from a letter dated the 29th March, 1966, and forwarded by the Department to the general secretary-treasurer of the Union of Postal Workers.

^{2/} See the next section entitled "First aid and medical facilities".

^{3/} We presume that the regulations provided for in Bill S-35 (Canada Labour [Safety] Code) will list these criteria.

We are convinced, following our inquiry:

- a) that neither the Department at the Headquarters level, nor some district directors and postmasters know exactly where they stand concerning accident hazards, and moreover,
- b) that even known hazards appear to be here to stay since it takes many days and months before they are rectified and forgotten.

We shall not attempt to apportion responsibilities. The Department is not the only party at fault.

WE RECOMMEND:

158. That a thorough survey be made, at once, in every post office, to identify accident hazards of all kinds.
159. That this survey be made with the co-operation of local joint committees.
160. That for this purpose, Headquarters authorize the postmasters and committees to ask inspectors of provincial Workmen's Compensation Boards or of municipal safety services to make recommendations and that this procedure be followed at least until such time as the Federal Government adopts permanent regulations.
161. That this survey, once completed, be forwarded to Headquarters, to district directors and to postmasters in staff post offices, grades 19, 18 and 17.
162. That immediate steps be taken to ensure that all accident hazards mentioned in these surveys are eliminated.
163. That Headquarters continue to acknowledge the authority of local joint committees in this matter and agree to take their recommendations into consideration.
164. That the appropriate authorities, including the Department, carry out, as soon as possible, the basic reforms which the latter proposes adopting in matters of safety and which are mentioned in this Report.
165. That the Department, with the co-operation of the Department of National Health and Welfare, make a study of the incidence of heart disease and intestinal disorders among letter carriers and that the results of this study be made available to the Letter Carriers' Union.

166. That a joint committee be established at the request of the above-mentioned Union to determine whether these illnesses or any other illness, considered to occur frequently with letter carriers, have the characteristics of so-called "occupational diseases" and if in the affirmative, that the Governor General in Council intervene and exercise the powers conferred by virtue of section 7 of the Government Employees Compensation Act.

4. First aid and medical facilities

An organization such as the Post Office Department, with so many employees performing tasks which are often tiring and sometimes hazardous, ought to have considered providing its employees with adequate first-aid facilities and good medical care on the premises.

This has not been done.

First aid

(1) Each post office must have suitably equipped kits to provide first aid to any employee who, ill or injured, needs first-aid treatment immediately.^{1/}

These first-aid kits do exist. Too often however they contain only a bare minimum of medical supplies. The Department claims that medical supplies are provided according to a list established in co-operation with the Department of National Health and Welfare. Obviously in some post offices this list has been misplaced.

(2) In a few post offices a joint committee handles all problems of first aid and medical care. It inspects the contents of the kits at regular intervals and with the co-operation of the postmaster ensures that there is nothing missing. This approach should be adopted by all offices.

(3) The following suggestion could also bring excellent results.

^{1/} Some post offices should have more than one kit.

The Department intends to undertake a campaign to encourage a number of its employees to take first-aid courses. We believe it should grant employees special leave with pay, if necessary, to attend such courses and extra pay in return for their services once they have obtained their certificate.

(4) Bill S-35 (Canada Labour [Safety] Code) stipulates that the Governor in Council be enabled to prescribe, by regulation, the first-aid facilities to be supplied, the first-aid training to be given, and the services to be provided by first-aid attendants.^{1/}

If the Governor in Council exercises this authority, employees will be able, in future, to request the Minister of Labour to have one of its safety officers^{2/} make enquiries and take the corrective measures provided for in this Bill.

Medical facilities

None of the post offices have health units, but there are so-called "quiet rooms", and, except in a few localities, during the Christmas period employees have no nursing services at their disposal.

Approximately two years ago the Montreal branch of the Union of Postal Workers requested that a health unit be set up in the main post office in that city, that nursing services be available on a full-time basis, and that more names of doctors who are available to handle emergency cases be listed.

The Department referred this request to the appropriate authorities without any concrete results.

The Department recently made further representation and obtained the following:

^{1/} Article 7 (n).

^{2/} Sections 9, 10, 14 and 19.

- a) One full-time nurse for the Montreal post office unit.^{1/}
- b) A second nurse for part-time work assigned to this same office.^{2/}
- c) Two additional part-time medical officers available to employees when necessary.

The Department has also prevailed upon the National Health and Welfare Department to include, in its supplementary estimates, one full-time position for a nurse in the Toronto main post office.

Finally, the Department has undertaken:

- a) to study the possibility of establishing a 24-hour nursing service in the main post offices in Montreal and Toronto;
- b) to discuss with the representatives of the Department of National Health and Welfare, and Treasury Board the details of a plan to establish health units in all the other major post offices across the country; and,
- c) to examine, with these same representatives, the need to develop practical standards for establishing nursing services elsewhere while taking into account the implications of setting up round the clock nursing services in offices where there are continuous operations.

The Department informed the Commission of its intention to provide the necessary space for first-aid and nursing-service staff when drawing up the plans for new buildings in major centres.^{3/}

Therefore, worthwhile progress is being made.

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- ^{1/} The 1966-1967 estimates of the Department of National Health and Welfare provide for this.
 - ^{2/} The Department states that this part-time nurse will be used on a full-time basis, if warranted.
 - ^{3/} In the proposed Ottawa post office, the Department has set aside a first-aid room on each of the three working floors.

In some of the large post offices in the United States, in addition to nursing services, provision is made for periodical medical examinations, emergency or first-aid treatment, and preventive medicine. The objective of the U.S. Administration is to extend these services gradually to all cities where shifts comprise more than 300 employees at any given time. Perhaps the Department will want to consider such a program.

We note that the appointment of a safety officer at Headquarters, in the near future, will help greatly in ensuring the proper co-ordination of the first-aid and medical services and the safety and accident prevention programs.

WE RECOMMEND:

167. That the Department direct its postmasters to inspect the first-aid kits in their respective post offices.
168. That, whenever these kits do not contain the medical supplies listed by the Department of National Health and Welfare, immediate action be taken to correct the situation.
169. That the local joint committees, with the co-operation of the postmasters, see that the first-aid kits are always stocked with the required medical supplies.
170. That the Department undertake a campaign to encourage a number of its employees to take first-aid courses and that, for this purpose, it grant leave with pay whenever warranted.
171. That employees who have received their first-aid certificates be paid additional remuneration in line with the additional responsibilities assigned to them.
172. That Treasury Board and the Department of National Health and Welfare authorize the Post Office Department to hire one full-time nurse for every post office with an approximate total establishment of 500 employees.
173. That a list of doctors available in an emergency be posted in prominent places.

5. Equipment and supplies

The Department, in accordance with the official line of authority, is responsible for ensuring that equipment and supplies vital to the operation of the postal service are made available to employees.

It identifies the needs of each office and prepares the necessary requisitions keeping in mind the need to be reasonably economical.^{1/}

Through directives, circulars and catalogues, Headquarters keeps district directors, postmasters and officers in the field operating services up to date on the various articles available. It operates a central depot in Ottawa and claims to meet quickly all legitimate requests. We have perused its directives and catalogues. They appear satisfactory.

One category of equipment and supplies, required by post offices and its employees, is not provided by the Department because it does not have the authority, e.g., furniture and standard furnishings, fans, fire extinguishers, fire hoses, etc.^{2/} This is the responsibility of the Department of Public Works and the Department hastens to mention that it had always been able to count on its assistance.

Finally, there is the problem of maintaining and repairing equipment and supplies.

In the larger post offices the Department hires staff to perform these duties, but these employees look only after equipment and supplies which are peculiar to the postal service. In smaller post offices repairs are "contracted out". Until recently the maintenance and repair of other categories of equipment and supplies was the responsibility of the Department of Public Works.

We shall not attempt to deal with every one of the innumerable complaints from employees. A few examples will be sufficient: antiquated cabinets, chairs and tables, binneys in poor repair, worn out cancelling machines, metal tables with no protective edge, conveyors not equipped with dust filters, lack of indexed stamp books, shortage of pencils and scissors, fans out of order, fire extinguishers in bad operating condition, and ever so many other complaints.

^{1/} The Department takes stock of its equipment and supplies once a year during May and June.

^{2/} Recently, the responsibility for office furniture and supplies was transferred to the Department of Defence Production.

We were able to see for ourselves that several complaints were well founded. There is no doubt that problems do exist.

These problems arise either because of a lack of attention or inspection at the local level, or from the lack of concern of some postmasters or both. They may also arise because of a lack of real co-operation or an absence of co-ordination between the Post Office Department and the Department of Public Works.

A good number of these problems would be resolved more easily if greater authority were granted to the Department for the general maintenance of post offices and for minor repairs and if the district engineers of the Department of Public Works had more latitude in both the management and financial fields.^{1/}

There are some district directors and postmasters, possibly with more initiative and aggressiveness than others, who have no serious difficulties in keeping their post offices in good order. They manage to obtain, because of their persistence, just about everything they need from the Department of Public Works' representatives. On the other hand, there are others, either because they do not understand or do not want to understand the importance of the problem, or because they give up after one or two attempts and let things drag, who only add more weight to the employees' demands.

In many localities employees mentioned the representations they had made, without success, to obtain furniture and supplies which they thought were essential, e.g., window screens or deflectors, ventilating units, refrigerated water fountains, etc.

One will appreciate that our Commission cannot rule on the merit of each case. All interested parties together should study these carefully and the Department, on the basis of the recommendations received, should either correct the situation or take the necessary steps to have them corrected.

^{1/} We understand that such is now the policy of the Department of Public Works.

WE RECOMMEND:

174. That Headquarters remind all concerned that there are sufficient equipment and supplies and that the maintenance or replacement of worn-out items should not be neglected.
175. That the Department supply the staff organizations with catalogues and scales of issue of supplies to enable them to keep their local representatives well posted.
176. That, in every post office, through local joint committees an inventory be carried out concerning the condition of the equipment and supplies on hand and the need to obtain furniture, equipment, supplies or other accessories.
177. That postmasters and district directors immediately take the necessary steps to correct the deficiencies identified through this inventory.
178. That more authority be delegated to district directors and postmasters concerning maintenance, minor repairs and renovations of post offices.
179. That, wherever necessary, a better co-ordination be sought, between the Post Office Department and other departments responsible for maintenance, to obtain more expeditious service.

We heard a few other grievances.

(1) The most important one received some publicity: the sorting stools.

At the outset of our inquiry, Headquarters changed its policy on the use of stools. Dissatisfaction remains for two reasons: the interpretation given in different places to the new policy and the lack of comfort of the stools.

The actual use of sorting stools is a personal matter. Some may very well not want to use them and remain standing, others may prefer to sit down from time to time. The Department should leave mail sorters completely free to use the stools. If there are abuses which affect their normal performance, the Department will then have to deal with individual cases only.

It is quite evident that the stools are not comfortable. This is the main reason why some sorters seldom make use of them. It would be interesting to

see if a stool with a swivel chair, back and foot rests and easily adjustable as to height would not be more suitable.

(2) To ease the strain of sorters it would be advisable to cover the floor in front of the sorting cases with a rubber mat or other acceptable material.

(3) In nearly all post offices there is a lunch room, a cafeteria or a place where employees may eat or have coffee, tea, hot chocolate or some other beverage. In some of these rooms there are no electrical appliances available for making drinks during the evening or night shifts.

The Department could easily correct this deficiency if it were to install on each floor, where the number of employees so warrants, hot-plates or automatic dispensers, and benches and counters along the side of the wall.

WE RECOMMEND:

180. That Headquarters instruct postmasters that a mail sorter is entitled to use his stool whenever he pleases.
181. That the Department study the possibility of acquiring a more comfortable type stool and of covering the floor in front of the sorting cases with some material to ease the strain.
182. That the Department take the necessary steps so that employees working evening or night shifts may have the use of lunch rooms or cafeterias or, failing this, that it supply them with hot-plates or automatic dispensers.

(1) In railway mail cars, the clerks in order to reach mail bags in the baggage compartment must twist their way through a "creep hole" of approximately two square feet located in the wall near the floor. A person of average size is able to do so but only with difficulty.

We suggested that this "creep hole" be replaced by a door. The Department considers this is an interesting suggestion, even if it means modifications to the sorting cases. It intends to discuss this proposal with the

railway companies. Evidently, it will be necessary to be careful not to reduce the working space of the sorting clerks to any great extent.

(2) Railway mail clerks also protested against the lamentable way the cars are maintained and equipped: insufficient lighting, heating, ventilation, windows, doors, floors and sorting cases badly maintained and the general lack of acceptable sanitary facilities.

The Department acknowledges the merit of a good number of these grievances. It has notified the railway companies accordingly but without too much success. It intends to adopt a firmer attitude and expects that these companies will finally deal with these different requests.

WE RECOMMEND:

183. That the Department continue to make vigorous representations to the railway companies to obtain an improvement in physical and environmental working conditions in railway mail cars.
184. That, wherever possible, and especially with cars expected to remain in service, the Department arrange to have the openings to the baggage compartment enlarged.

6. Dust

In the course of a day's work employees handle mail bags in the carrying out of their respective duties. These bags are rather dirty and this is understandable.

Employees complain that the Department does not clean them periodically and that the dust from the bags and the dust raised during their handling sometimes makes the work areas unbearable and unhealthy.

At Headquarters' request, the Department of National Health and Welfare carried out a study of the situation at Toronto in January 1965 and came to the conclusion that the dust in the post office did not seriously affect the health of the employees.

We are quite willing to take their word for it,^{1/} but the problem still exists. Even if certain working conditions do not constitute a serious hazard in themselves, they nonetheless are undesirable and continue to be a source of irritation and constant complaint.

A solution to this problem must be found even if it is not altogether satisfactory. Mail bags could be cleaned at regular intervals. The Department states that attempts made to clean bags in Canada through washing, dry cleaning or dust extraction by vacuuming, had been found unsatisfactory and have proved to be very expensive. On the other hand, methods to clean mail bags in the United States and England are relatively successful.

It seems, moreover, that the amount of dust which clings to the inside of a mail bag will vary and that some cleaning methods are more effective than others depending on the nature of the material of the bag. In Canada, mail bags are made of canvas.

Finally, there is a certain amount of dust in the working areas and we have observed inexplicable shortcomings.

Whether the daily cleaning of a post office is entrusted to a caretaker employed by the Department of Public Works or to a sub-contractor or a person appointed by that Department, there are too many post offices where cleanliness leaves much to be desired.

WE RECOMMEND:

185. That the Department exercise greater care to ensure that post offices are kept suitably clean and that it issue instructions accordingly.

^{1/} It is always possible that this is not the case in some post offices or postal stations where the ventilation is even more inadequate.

186. That postmasters, either personally or through a person delegated by them, make regular inspection tours to check on the cleanliness of the post offices under their management.
187. That postmasters correct the situation in all cases where they see the caretaker or the cleaner not doing his work satisfactorily.
188. That the Department recognize the right of local joint committees to make recommendations on this matter.
189. That the Department continue its research in order to find the most practical solution regarding the cleaning of mail bags.

We brought to the attention of Headquarters a few isolated complaints concerning the use of mail bags for the conveyance of articles which are not postal matters. Headquarters has recently given orders to put an end to such abuses.

7. Construction of post offices, air-conditioning and lighting

Construction of post offices

Over the years, the policy of the Department and of the appropriate authorities has aimed at the replacement, in successive stages, of those post offices which prove to be inadequate for one reason or another.^{1/}

Since January 1, 1956, more than 1,100 new buildings, sheltering about 17,000 employees, have been built. This last figure represents slightly more than half of the staff and semi-staff post office employees working in premises provided by the Crown. Of course, some of these buildings are small and are used only by one or two employees; but there are others, in Vancouver, in Winnipeg and in Quebec City, for instance, which are impressive buildings housing a large number of personnel. At the present time, 115 post offices, including the new Edmonton postal terminal, are under construction. Furthermore, the Department informs

^{1/} We were rather surprised to find that, in some large centres, post office buildings, although of recent construction, no longer meet the needs of the postal service.

the Commission that progress is being made on plans for new postal terminals in Ottawa and in Toronto and that it has undertaken a preliminary study with a view to erecting new premises for the Montreal post office. Upon completion of all these new buildings, approximately 8,500 employees who are presently working in buildings considered sub-standard, will be relocated.

The Department submits that, in the light of past experience, employees should recognize that any post office not meeting the current standards of working conditions, should be replaced or renovated as financial resources allow.

However, the Commission realizes that it may still take several years before construction in Toronto and in Montreal begins and it suggests strongly that measures be taken in the meantime to improve these buildings to make them conform to more suitable standards.

WE RECOMMEND:

190. That, in preparing plans for new post offices, the appropriate authorities take into further consideration all expected postal service expansion for the following ten years and of the probable consequences of this expansion from all standpoints, including that of the comfort and welfare of non-supervisory operating personnel.
191. That mobile partitions be used in new post offices to facilitate the rearrangement of the working premises should the need arise.

Air-conditioning

Until a year or so ago, the Government was not ready to consider installing air-conditioning systems in its offices. A more flexible attitude has since been adopted. For instance, such a system was authorized for the Winnipeg postal terminal. It is expected that the same type of system will be installed in the terminals now being planned. The Department also intends to ask the Department of Public Works to make a decision on the feasibility of installing such a system in some of the older buildings, and if it is not possible, then provide compact air-conditioning units.

WE RECOMMEND:

192. That air-conditioning systems be installed in all future staff post offices providing the climate of the region warrants it.
193. That, failing to provide such installation in existing staff post offices, the necessary steps be taken to ensure adequate ventilation for employees in all areas where they are required to work.

Lighting

Improved lighting is now installed in new post offices. The Department states that official codes and standards are being followed to the letter in old post offices. It considers them satisfactory and comparable to those applied in the private sector. It claims that it has replaced all obsolete lighting equipment wherever possible. It has obtained agreement from the Department of Public Works that fluorescent lighting be installed, and if this is not possible that additional lights be provided.

Yet there are complaints. Some appear well-founded. We visited many sorting areas in basement postal stations and in railway mail cars particularly, where lighting was far from adequate.

WE RECOMMEND:

194. That a complete inspection be made of each staff post office, of each postal station and of each railway mail car, to ensure that the lighting is both satisfactory and in accordance with established standards and codes.
195. That this inspection be carried out through local joint committees.

8. Transportation

(1) As a general rule, the Department is not responsible for the transportation of an employee from his home to his place of work, or vice versa.

(2) However, it does provide transportation from one work location to another, such as for the letter carrier who leaves the post office to go to the

start of his walk or who returns at the end of the morning or afternoon and for the postal clerk who is transferred from one postal station to another, without prior notice.

(3) The Department states that it does not disregard the financial burden of transportation costs to employees. As far as possible, it takes the schedules of the public transportation services into account when setting the starting and finishing times for each shift. It says it takes the same precautions when laying out the carriers' walks. It adds that if such a walk ends more than 500 yards from the nearest point of public transportation, or if there is any excessive waiting period, it ensures that the carrier is transported by other means.

(4) The normal agreement for the transportation of carriers by public transportation is a flat rate contract on the basis of four trips per person per day. When such a contract cannot be arranged, either because the transportation company refuses or because it demands an exorbitant rate, the Department issues from four to nine tickets to the carrier on the basis of the characteristics of his walk.

(5) Variation in the volume of mail and in walking conditions affect the time when the carrier completes his walk. The Department admits that it is therefore sometimes difficult to schedule transportation arrangements so that the carrier does not have to wait at all.

(6) Recently the Department revised its regulations respecting the transportation of letter carriers to assure them adequate transportation at all times.

Generally, we find these explanations satisfactory. We want to remind employees, who are not convinced that all these measures are being taken, that the Department is willing to discuss this matter and to seek a solution in keeping with its general policy.

We heard of two other problems concerning transportation.

(1) The first concerns only the letter carriers.

They propose that the Department rescind the regulations prohibiting the use of their cars to travel to and from their walks.

This proposal involves both advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages

a) If this was permitted the carrier would arrive sooner at his walk and would perform his duties in less time than the eight hours now allotted. As a result, it would be possible to add points of call to his walk to restore the work period to eight full hours, therefore the number of walks could be decreased as well as the personnel and costs.

b) Under certain conditions, letter carriers might reach an agreement with the Department concerning the transportation of mail to relay boxes, thus eliminating transportation of mail by contractors.

Disadvantages

a) The Department would probably be obliged to discontinue its flat rate contracts with transportation companies who would no longer be interested because of the greatly reduced requirements and the likelihood of frequent changes.

b) One must bear in mind that not all carriers own a car. On the regular carrier's rotation day or when absent on leave his replacement may not own a car, or may not wish to use it: he then would have to use public transportation. Hence the normal starting time of the delivery would be delayed and complaints would probably be received from some patrons.

c) In case of accident or mechanical breakdown any delay would affect the time of delivery.

- d) The Crown could be exposed to possible third party liability.
- e) The Department believes that, in some cases, the walks would have to be re-arranged so that the starting and finishing points would be reasonably close together, to prevent the letter carrier from having to walk too far to reach his car after completing his rounds.

Although incomplete, this preliminary review points out the many difficulties which the letter carriers' proposal would create. These difficulties are not insurmountable. The Department proposes to conduct a study and to discuss the pros and cons with the Letter Carriers' Union.

- (2) The second problem affects all employees.

They complained that the notice given by the Department when overtime is required is often so short that they do not have sufficient time to arrange for transportation home after the public transportation facilities have stopped operating.

The Department admits that there is insufficient warning at times but not through any fault of its own. Under such circumstances, we believe that it should provide employees with the necessary transportation.

WE RECOMMEND:

- 196. That postmasters review periodically the agreements for the transportation of employees, especially in cases when public transportation is not available.
- 197. That the Department undertake a complete study of the carriers' proposal to rescind the regulation prohibiting the use of their privately owned cars in carrying out their duties.
- 198. That after this study is completed, the Department discuss the pros and cons with the Letter Carriers' Union, first at the national level and if necessary at the local level.
- 199. That the Department assume responsibility for providing transportation to employees required to work overtime, without sufficient notice, after public transportation has stopped operating.

9. Parking

Many postal employees own cars which they use to travel to and from work. For many this is neither a luxury nor a whim, but a necessity. The Department sometimes sets an arrival or departure time which prevents employees from relying on public transportation. We are concerned most of all with such employees.

The Department of Public Works makes available to other departments parking lots of various sizes and establishes priority guide-lines in their allocation of parking spaces.

For post office employees the order of allocation is usually as follows:

- a) government-owned vehicles;
- b) district director, postmaster, senior officials and physically handicapped employees;
- c) employees frequently called upon to use their own cars on official business;
- d) others. Usually, on a first-come-first-served basis.

(1) Many complaints were raised about the small number of spaces available as well as the method of allocation. Reference was made to spaces not utilized during the evening and at night. Departure time for postal employees may conflict with the arrival time of those authorized to use them in the daytime. An adjustment of 15 minutes or so in the arrival times would allow postal employees greater utilization of the parking spaces allocated either to the post office or to other departments.

(2) We were informed also that in one city in particular, the mail contractor leaves his trucks within the post office overnight, thereby blocking off parking space which could be used by employees.

(3) We were also told that spaces are being allocated to personnel of other departments who sometimes have less priority than postal workers.

Far be it from us to believe that an easy solution can be found to the problem of parking facilities for postal employees.

Post offices, in most cases, are located in the centre of a commercial district. Nearby or easily accessible and usable vacant lots are few in such areas or so costly that the Government does not consider it a wise policy to buy or rent them for the sole purpose of providing parking facilities. The inner courtyards, more often than not, are so small that to allow parking would probably mean taking the risk, at certain hours, of either paralysing mail trucks and other vehicular traffic, or make circulation very difficult.

WE RECOMMEND:

200. That, when planning the construction of new post offices, measures be taken to ensure postal employees adequate parking facilities particularly for those on evening and night shifts.
201. That, in the future, bearing in mind local conditions, the Department allocate available parking spaces to employees according to their needs rather than on a first-come-first-served basis, and that it set as basic criteria the distance the employee must travel as well as the availability of public transportation.
202. That where employees have an equal need for parking spaces, seniority be the deciding factor.
203. That the Department, where limited parking facilities are available, make every effort to adjust shift schedules to coincide with the operating hours of public transportation.
204. That the use of parking spaces for contractors' vehicles be strictly prohibited, except when it is an immediate operational requirement.
205. That consideration be given by the Department, always bearing in mind local conditions, to the feasibility of allocating parking spaces on a rotation basis so that a greater number of employees may enjoy this privilege.
206. That every effort be made by the Department to obtain parking spaces from the Department of Public Works for evening and night shift workers, bearing in mind that some persons using spaces allocated to other departments may have less priority.

207. That, wherever possible, arrangements be made with the assistance of the Department of Public Works, for the use, during evening and night shifts, of vacant spaces rightly allocated to other departments and that, if necessary, shift schedules be adjusted by fifteen minutes or so to arrive at better co-ordination.
208. That the Department allow the participation of the local joint committees in all matters mentioned in recommendations 201 to 207 inclusive.

10. Smoking

Postal clerks and letter carriers requested the right to smoke at any time and any place during their tour of duty. The Department recognizes this right but deems it advisable to restrict the exercise of this right as a safety measure or simply as a sign of good manners.

There has been no known incident where fire in a post office has been attributed to the negligence of an employee smoking. However, a few cases of spoiled or damaged mail were reported.

We do not believe that the risk should be taken. We admit that the Department must take adequate precautions. We agree, therefore, with its decision not to allow employees who handle or sort mail to smoke while carrying out these duties. On the other hand, a larger number of areas could be designated for smoking. These should be as close as possible to the working areas.

We believe that the existing regulation concerning smoking for wicket clerks is too rigid. We agree that they should not be allowed to smoke while serving the public. Such restrictions exist for employees in many public agencies, banks, stores, and other industrial or commercial establishments. To extend this restriction to the whole wicket area is another matter.

A comment should be made about the letter carriers smoking on their walks.

We have no objections to carriers being authorized to smoke outside the office. We are quite sure that they will abide by the most elementary rules of courtesy when they come in contact with their patrons.

WE RECOMMEND:

209. That present departmental regulations on smoking be maintained except for letter carriers after they have left the post office and wicket clerks when not directly serving the public.
210. That Headquarters authorize postmasters to designate a larger number of smoking areas for inside employees handling or sorting mail.

CHAPTER 25

PREFERRED ASSIGNMENT FOR CAUSE

Because of age, illness or accident an employee may become incapable of carrying out all the normal daily tasks of his position, even though he may still be physically capable of performing some of his duties.

Postal clerks, and letter carriers in particular, were concerned with this problem. They suggested that the Department, as much as possible, assign lighter duties to such an employee.

This suggestion is prompted by a legitimate and commendable desire to help fellow employees. But it poses serious problems.

There are only a few full-time positions in the Post Office requiring a minimum of physical effort. These positions, referred to as "preferred assignments" are very much in demand and are allotted on a seniority basis, provided applicants are qualified. To make these positions available to handicapped employees, the staff organizations, as well as the employees, would therefore have to agree to amend their present seniority policy.^{1/} This is a matter for serious consideration.

The Department states that it makes every effort to assign the more elderly or handicapped employees to lighter duties whenever possible. In some cases, if the employees concerned possess the required knowledge and qualifications, it attempts to have them transferred to another department.

^{1/} See Chapter 12, "Seniority".

It may well be that the Department cannot do much more, bearing in mind its role and operational commitments. Hence there is no easy solution.

The Department might be well advised, especially in the larger staff post offices, to review the whole situation on a local basis to determine if one or more new full-time preferred positions could be created, or whether one or more tasks considered light could be combined or modified. If this were possible some handicapped employees would not have to leave the postal service.

WE RECOMMEND:

211. That the Department continue to assign employees, handicapped but physically capable of working, to lighter assignments.
212. That the staff organizations, as well as the employees, assist the Department by agreeing that a certain number of positions called "preferred" or others with lighter duties be made available to handicapped employees regardless of seniority.
213. That district directors and postmasters of the larger staff post offices, with the assistance and co-operation of the local joint committees, carry out a study to determine, in accordance with local conditions, if one or more new preferred positions with lighter duties can be created.

CHAPTER 26

SOME MAJOR FRINGE BENEFITS

Postal employees enjoy all the fringe benefits granted by the Government to civil servants. Several have been referred to in preceding chapters.

In the present chapter, we discuss, with one exception, fringe benefits having social security implications whose aim is to protect the worker against the probable or possible hazards of life, e.g., illness and old age.

Some of these benefits formed the subject of remarks, criticisms and suggestions as numerous as they were diversified. It would be useless and tedious to comment on each one of them. We have attempted to group them on the basis of the proposals contained in the briefs submitted by the national leaders of the staff organizations last April.

Before discussing these problems we should make clear what we have in mind.

(1) Whether it be in the normal course of events or in the climate of collective bargaining, the fringe benefits in question are assessed generally as a more or less indivisible "package". Usually, they are considered in relation to salaries.

As indicated above, employees discussed only some of these benefits. We do not blame them for having taken this attitude and for not wanting to lose those benefits with which they said they were satisfied.

But we cannot ignore or lose sight of the fact that we have no jurisdiction in the matter of salaries and that salaries will be thoroughly reviewed shortly "in the collective bargaining climate".

(2) Another aspect gave us food for thought.

We asked ourselves if, within terms of reference, it would be reasonable to make precise recommendations on a subject so far-reaching and of interest to all civil servants. The staff organizations to which the latter belong have not appeared before our Commission. We do not know if they support the views expressed by the postal employees.

For all these reasons, and after careful consideration, we have decided to set forth the main demands received, to express some of our own reactions and to make only a few general recommendations.

We hope this approach will be understood and accepted. In other respects it should help the appropriate authorities and all interested parties to know where they stand and to act accordingly, if they deem it advisable.

1. Superannuation and death benefit plans

The Public Service Superannuation Act^{1/} provides a retirement pension to postal employees subject to certain conditions.

On the whole, these employees want the Government to increase the benefits and reduce the contributions.

They recommended:

- a) that retirement be optional after 25 years of service;
- b) that the pension be paid after 30 rather than 35 years;
- c) that a widow's pension be increased from 50% to 100% and that 10% be granted for each dependent child to a maximum of four children;
- d) that the calculation of entitlements be based on the best five years of salary instead of the present six years;

^{1/} R.S., 1952/53, c. 47, as amended.

- e) that benefits be paid on the basis of $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ per year of service instead of 2%;
- f) that employees be paid bank-rate interest on superannuation refunds.

They maintained that the new Canada Pension Plan was superior to the Superannuation Plan because the former provides greater benefits and requires relatively smaller contributions over a shorter period of time.

Finally, the staff organizations have asked to participate in the administration of the Superannuation Fund so as to be in a better position to inform their members on the true financial position of the Fund and its actuarial needs.

All those who made these different recommendations before our Commission must admit that they have not supported them with any careful study.

The Commission, however, made enquiries and believes that it is doing the postal employees a service by summarizing some of the information received. Perhaps it will be found far too much in favour of maintaining the status quo. No matter what we say, the staff organizations will some day have to undertake the necessary research in order to discuss with the appropriate authorities any proposed amendment to the Public Service Superannuation Act. Our comments will at least enable them to look at the whole problem in a more objective manner and to know beforehand some of the difficulties they will have to resolve eventually.

We are under the impression that postal employees do not have an adequate appreciation of certain advantages received under the Superannuation Act. They do not know how it operates. They have no idea what funds are required to maintain the Fund on a sound actuarial basis. It is possible that only an actuary can understand all its financial implications!

(1) Undoubtedly the current balance in the Superannuation Account is large. This balance, to which are added the current annual employee contributions

and government credits, exceeds by far payments out of the Account. This has led to a general impression that there is a surplus and that benefits should be increased.

The Superannuation Account follows the principles of funding generally accepted for employer-employee pension plans.

Pension benefits are regarded as deferred compensation. Once the rates are set, contributions are collected at estimated levels required to accumulate enough funds during the active lifetime of the contributors and to pay, in due course, the predetermined pensions and additional benefits. If the number of employees in the Public Service were to remain unchanged and if the Superannuation Account came to maturity at the same time, annual employee contributions and government credits (including interest) should, theoretically, be equal to benefit payments. Until such circumstances prevail (if ever they will) contributions and sums credited to the Account exceed benefit payments and the Account continues to increase. This increase simply reflects the growing liabilities in respect to contributors on active service as well as pensioners. It does not indicate a "surplus".

In other words, the fact that income for a year exceeds benefits paid or that the balance in the Superannuation Account increases over the years does not mean that there is a surplus of funds in this Account.

There is only one way in which to determine whether there is a surplus or a deficit: establish, by means of actuarial calculations, the value of all benefit payments which may fall due, and the sum of future contributions of all contributors, past and present. The Public Service Superannuation Act requires that such an actuarial valuation be made and that a report be tabled in Parliament, at least once every five years.^{1/}

^{1/} The last report, tabled on November 12th, 1964, can be obtained by the staff associations, on request.

It would thus appear that no one can say that there now exists a marginal surplus which would justify the granting of additional benefits. There is no surplus as such, there is only a balance. This balance, we reiterate, represents the amount which, together with future contributions from present contributors, and the matching contributions by the Government and interest earnings, should be sufficient to provide all benefits to past and present contributors and their dependents. If, however, the present value of future benefits were to exceed the present value of future contributions plus the balance on hand, the Fund would be in deficit by an amount equal to such excess.

(2) The percentage of salary (i.e., total contribution rate) required to provide for future benefits of new contributors came up also for discussion.

If Public Service salaries increase in the future at an average rate of 3% per annum it is estimated that, on the average, 18% of salaries of new male contributors and 16% of new female contributors will be required to provide for their future benefits.

Since contributions are made by male contributors at the rate of $6\frac{1}{2}\%$ of their salary and by female contributors at the rate of 5%, the actual cost to the Government of benefits that will become payable to new contributors will equal approximately double the contributions paid by these contributors.

During the ten years, ended March 1965, employees contributed \$472.5 million to the Public Service Superannuation Account whereas the Government credited \$865.8 million, apart from \$526 million of interest. In respect to this, \$39.9 million had yet to be charged as a budgetary expenditure as of March 31, 1965. Thus, excluding the interest credit, the ultimate cost to the Government may well be more than twice the contributions of public servants.

Not taking into account the extra cost arising from future general salary adjustments the Superannuation Account, as at March 31, 1965, was thus

practically in balance. However, deficiencies may arise from time to time because:

- a) basic contributions are not adequate;
- b) no special credits are provided for increases in liabilities arising out of increases in general levels of salary; or
- c) the economic development has not been as favourable as anticipated in previous forecasts.

There have never been any deficiencies because of the lack of matching contributions by the Government. Successive governments have, in the past, liquidated these deficiencies when it appeared convenient or appropriate. To avoid these losses in interest credits over a period of time, without correspondingly increasing the balance in the Account, the Department of Finance has credited the Account with an amount equal to the entire deficiency and has entered a debit to the same amount in the Government balance sheet in the form of a deferred charge. This procedure enabled the Government to liquidate this deferred charge as it appeared appropriate and, at the same time, to reflect in the Account the full public service pension net liability so that interest credits could be made on the total net liability with no consequent loss.

(3) Excesses of employee contributions and Government credits over benefit payments have been and are being used for current revenue purposes by the Government of the day.

There is nothing sinister or questionable in this situation.

Since the Superannuation Account is simply an account in the Consolidated Revenue Fund, it is normal that current excesses of receipts over disbursements be available to the Government.

Furthermore, in any private employer-employee pension plan, the administrators of such a fund, knowing that they will not have to make immediate payments, always make normal investments, either by the financing of Government activities, or to promote Government guaranteed enterprises.

In the case of the Public Service, there is no reason to doubt the survival of the employer. There can be no safer investment than an obligation of the Government of Canada. The balance of the Superannuation Account is the equivalent of such an investment, backed by the obligation of the Government to pay benefits to Public Service contributors and their dependents in accordance with the provisions of the Public Service Superannuation Act. It does not mean, that, because this balance is not in the hands of a chartered bank or an equivalent amount of gold is not stored in the vaults of the Parliament Buildings, that future benefit payments are jeopardized. This balance is guaranteed as a right by law: so long as Parliament has the power of taxation or recourse to borrowing, the benefits provided in the legislation will be paid.

(4) If the present relationship between contributions and benefits is to be maintained, any increase in benefits is subject to a corresponding increase in contributions. The reverse is also true. Consequently, if the rate of contributions is decreased, the benefits will be decreased proportionately. Hence, it follows that interest payments on refund, as suggested by the staff organizations, would warrant an increase in contributions or a decrease in benefits. It is estimated that it would cost approximately 1% of the yearly balance to pay interest on refunds. It would seem preferable to keep the benefits on a more favourable basis and thus allow the great majority of contributors to benefit from them.

(5) Some people wonder why the Canada Pension Plan provides, initially, more benefits in proportion to the amounts contributed. There are two reasons:

- a) The Canada Pension Plan is not fully funded like the plan under the Public Service Superannuation Act.
- b) It has a relatively short ten-year maturity period. This factor, combined with the preceding one, means that returns of the Canada Pension Plan are bound to be disproportionate, particularly during the early years.

We would like to refer to the study made by the Royal Commission on Government Organization.

This study mentions that the Federal Superannuation Plan is just as generous as all or almost all private plans and is superior to most. The Report is quite explicit in stating that this Pension Plan is very costly for the Government. It enumerates a number of advantages which we would like to quote for the information of postal employees:

- . "The Pension Plan for the public service represents a substantial advantage in relation to the plans available to employees in industry. While most employees in medium and large firms are covered by pension plans, the Public Service Superannuation Act provides a number of advantages:
- . Participation is automatic, whereas eligibility provisions in many industrial plans specify age or length of service.
- . After an employee has made contributions for thirty-five years he ceases to make payments into the plan, whereas almost all industrial plans require contributions up to the date of retirement.
- . The pension formula provides two per cent of earnings for each year of service whereas a majority of industrial unit benefit plans have a less generous benefit formula. The earnings' base under the public service plan is the employee's earnings averaged over the best six years of service, thus yielding much higher pensions than would the same percentage of average career earnings. Few employees in industry have pensions calculated against the best years of average earnings. The earnings' base period under the Superannuation Act was changed recently from the "best 10 years" to the "best 6 years", a distinct sweetening of the pension plan, with an accompanying increase in its cost to the government.
- . Survivors' benefits under the public service plan are significantly more generous than the great majority of industrial plans. On the death of the husband, the wife receives 50% of the husband's pension, plus 10% for each child up to a maximum of 90% of the pension. The pension ceases if she remarries, but is restored should she again become a widow.
- . The provision under the public service plan for immediate annuities, without discount for age, in the event of disability, is significantly more generous than those found in most industrial plans.

- . There is full vesting of pension rights after five years' service, accrued rights being granted in the form of deferred annuities.
- . The rate of employee contribution (6½% of earnings for men and 5% for women) under the public service plan is significantly higher than the most common rate, 5% of earnings, found in industrial plans. This is offset, however, by the provision for cessation of contributions after thirty-five years of contributory service."^{1/}

The same Commission had this to say with regards to Supplementary Death

Benefits:

"The Public Service Superannuation Act provides a supplementary death benefit...based on salary up to a maximum of \$5,000... This equivalent of group life insurance for civil servants is in keeping with industrial practice, but the amount of the employer contribution in industry is normally at least 50 per cent whereas the government's share of the cost is considerably smaller. Formulae for establishing maximum individual coverage vary widely in industry but many office employees participate in plans providing coverage at least equal to their annual earnings. Post-retirement coverage and total and permanent disability are provided for in many industrial group life insurance plans. On balance, the supplementary death benefit for civil servants is less favourable than equivalent group life insurance plans commonly available in industry.

The supplementary death benefits in the public service should, however, be viewed together with the survivorship provisions in the Public Service Superannuation Act."^{2/}

Several staff organizations suggested that the maximum coverage for survivors in the Death Benefit Plan be increased to the equivalent of the employee's annual earnings.

We agree entirely with this suggestion.

(6) Some employees are concerned about the effects of the Canada Pension Plan on their superannuation. The Government has provided many explanations on this matter. Suffice it to say that the total contributions by employees did not increase when the Canada Pension Plan came into force. In some cases, the combined benefits

^{1/} The Royal Commission on Government Organization, Volume 1, Report 3, Personnel Management, Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1960, pp. 400 and 401.

^{2/} Ibid., p. 400.

will exceed modestly the retirement benefits. They will not be less except where an employee retires and subsequently finds employment outside the Public Service. This employee will then have to contribute to the Canada Pension Plan after he has reached the age of 65 but he will receive only the "decreased" share of his civil service pension.

Superannuation benefits paid before age 65 to persons retiring between the ages of 60 and 64 will be the same as those which are now paid under the Public Service Superannuation Act.

(7) We agree in principle with a more active participation by the staff organizations in the administration of the Fund. It should be noted, however, that there is already an Advisory Committee on the Public Service Superannuation Act and that this committee includes representatives of the various staff organizations. This committee considers all proposed amendments and makes appropriate recommendations to the Minister of Finance.

We suggest that the staff organizations obtain the services of a competent professional actuary so that he may advise them on the practicality of their proposals, and establish once and for all whether or not the two billion dollar balance is absolutely necessary to maintain the Superannuation Fund on a sound actuarial basis. Perhaps then the staff organizations will find it necessary to revise their position and submit other recommendations, better understood and more appropriate, with a view to obtain additional benefits.

2. Accumulated sick leave credits

Two definite proposals on sick leave were submitted to us:

- a) that henceforth this leave be earned and accumulated at the rate of one and one half days (instead of $1\frac{1}{4}$ days) per calendar month of employment in the course of which an employee has been paid a minimum of ten days; and

b) that the employee, when retiring, resigning, or leaving the service, voluntarily or compulsorily, receive the equivalent in cash of all accumulated sick leave credits.^{1/}

Many employees consider sick leave as an established right and not as insurance against the risk and consequences of a work stoppage which is beyond their control and of an indeterminate duration.

Some are inclined, at a favourable time and prior to retirement, to take advantage of their sick leave credits which they consider a useless reserve.

Under the Civil Service Regulations ^{2/} the deputy head is not obliged to grant sick leave. Of course, in practice, he does not refuse. The wording of the Regulation does not give any indication that this leave is an established right and, even less, that it accumulates as a reserve which can be disposed of at will by the employee.

Perhaps it would be just as well to return to the policy applicable prior to 1962 and to re-establish a relationship between retiring leave and accumulated sick leave. Although we do not have any statistics at hand establishing that, since this change of policy, employees have made greater use of accumulated sick leave, the fact remains nonetheless that an excellent incentive has thus been eliminated.

However, employees should not expect to have their accumulated sick leave paid in cash without taking into account the maximum of six months retiring leave or the gratuity to which they are now entitled.

However, there are several possible solutions:

- a) to undertake a study of trends in the use of sick leave during the course of the two last years preceding retirement;

^{1/} Mention was also made of certain abuses of so-called "casual" sick leave. This was discussed in Chapter 13, "Leave".

^{2/} Sections 47 to 54.

b) to analyse the pattern of sick leave since 1962, comparing it to those years when the amount of retiring leave granted depended upon the accumulated sick leave credits available;

c) based on the results of these studies and without forgetting that the field operating services of the post office are very similar to industry, to give serious consideration to the granting of a compensation under one of the following conditions:

(i) pay 25% to 30% of the accumulated sick leave after deduction of the six months retiring leave or of the gratuity granted;

(ii) after a certain number of days of sick leave have been accumulated, to add a percentage of these accumulated days to the vacation leave at the employee's own discretion. Even though vacation leave in the Public Service is rather generous, this addition might prompt employees not to abuse sick leave. We believe that this formula would not be too costly for the Government because the staff would remain on the job at a time when most needed.

3. Longevity pay

Longevity pay is extra pay with the sole criteria being long and satisfactory service. It is an incentive for employees who have been "dead-ended" in a job which offers very little opportunity for advancement.

For the Post Office Department, longevity pay appears advisable in principle. However, it gives rise to such problems that we suggest to employees that they carry out a more thorough study before recommending it officially. Here are some of the problems:

a) At the present time, it would be better for employees to concentrate their efforts on obtaining higher pay scales, on improving recruiting

methods and on adopting training methods and measures facilitating rotation or transfers to enable them to increase their knowledge and their qualifications and to increase correspondingly their possibilities for promotion which appear to them to be so slight today.

- b) It would be preferable to try and improve those fringe benefits, which they have already, to a more acceptable level rather than ask for an entirely new benefit.
- c) Employees should consider the effects of longevity pay on the basic salary. The employer must not take advantage of this to avoid justified salary increases nor should the employees demand it as a means of obtaining the equivalent of a pay increase to their basic salary. The principle of equal pay for equal work must be accepted and followed. Longevity pay must not mean a change whereby some employees would earn more, on a yearly basis, than their immediate supervisors.
- d) There is a serious risk that longevity pay may affect the productivity of employees as a whole or destroy their ambition.
- e) If the staff organizations decide not to postpone their demand for longevity pay they will have to decide to which group of employees this will apply, the number of years of service after which it will be granted and the intervals at which it will increase and in what proportion. Consideration will also have to be given either to the time the employee has spent in the service as a whole or in the same grade or if years of service will count only after the maximum rate of pay has been reached.

It is not up to this Commission to answer these questions and others just as pertinent, nor to suggest any type of longevity pay plan for the postal employees. This responsibility rests with their national leaders. They must obtain all information required, weigh the pros and cons, and scrutinize plans in use in Canada and elsewhere and the difficulties encountered in their application.

A survey of practices followed in industry for non-clerical personnel shows that only about 4½% of employees benefit from a longevity pay plan. Another survey, dating back to 1964, shows that the principle of longevity pay has become generally accepted in collective agreements respecting most policemen across the country. Such a plan applied to 75% of the 80 municipal corporations surveyed.

We do not believe that the payment of longevity pay can be of any help to the Department in finding a solution to its problems of recruiting and personnel turnover in some areas such as the central part of Ontario. These problems apply generally to recent recruits, and do not apply to older employees who will be the only ones to benefit from this bonus.

On the other hand, longevity pay would help boost the morale of long-service employees. A study made in February 1966 indicates that a good percentage of non-supervisory postal employees have been at the maximum of their class for many years. We note that 39.5%, or 8,775 employees, have been in this category for five years or more, 18.3%, or 4,066, for ten years or more, 7.9%, or 1,745, for 15 years or more, 1.6%, or 345, for 20 years or more, 0.6%, or 143, for 25 years or more, 0.2%, or 52, for 30 years or more, 0.1%, or 22, for 35 years or more.^{1/}

The average number of years of service an employee has served before becoming a postal officer grade 1 is slightly more than 17 years.

Under such circumstances we think it desirable that postal employees, having 15 to 20 years of service, be given longevity pay in cash. They will certainly appreciate this more than an award of a service pin or of some other token!

There may also be other departments, besides the Post Office, where the same situation exists and where an impressive number of employees belong to dead-end classes or categories and who may have just as serious if not a more serious problem of "dead-ending". Of course, it is not up to this Commission to discuss it.

^{1/} There are 6,655 employees (or 30%) with less than five years of service and only 6,730 (or 30.3%) who have not reached the maximum of their salary range.

But this should be another reason to prompt the Government to make its own thorough study of this problem, in the light of precedents set by other levels of Government, and to enquire into the advantages and disadvantages of longevity pay, of its consequential effects upon the basic pay plan, of the financial implications involved, of its repercussions on the Civil Service as a whole and of all other related factors.

4. Surgical-medical insurance plans

(1) Postal employees believe that the Government should assume the total cost of the group surgical-medical insurance plan rather than only half.

In the private sector, most employees contribute to similar plans but it should be pointed out that major medical costs are included in the federal plan whereas they are not in many industrial plans.

(2) Employees living in Saskatchewan asked that the Government pay half the cost of the premium of their provincial health plan. They claim they are not in as favourable a position as federal civil servants in other provinces.

A committee of the National Joint Council of the Public Service of Canada studied this problem in 1964. After a review of comparative costs and benefits, this committee, composed of representatives of both the Government and the employees, did not consider it advisable to recommend such a measure in its report.

Here again, we note that the staff organizations are poorly informed and urge the appropriate authorities to make this report available to them.

(3) It should be remembered that other provinces are setting up their own surgical-medical plan and that the Government has announced its intention to adopt a new national plan on July 1, 1968. All these new plans will have a bearing on the cost of contributions and will necessitate changes in the benefits and advantages of the present plan.

Under the circumstances, it is best to wait.

WE RECOMMEND:

214. That the staff organizations undertake a thorough study of the entire field of social security fringe benefits enjoyed now by postal employees to determine precisely the nature of and reason for the amendments they are clamouring for, including the possible adoption of a longevity pay plan.
215. That for this purpose, the appropriate authorities make available to the staff organizations all information they require to carry out this study.
216. That the staff organizations keep their own members informed on this study.
217. That the appropriate authorities, either during the forthcoming collective bargaining negotiations or in the general atmosphere of collective bargaining, agree to discuss these fringe benefits and all their terms and conditions.

PART IV

PROBLEMS OF PARTICULAR

INTEREST TO POSTAL CLERKS

CHAPTER 27

WICKET CLERKS

Postal clerks on wicket duties perform various tasks, e.g., selling postage and unemployment insurance stamps, registering mail, servicing stamp meter machines, conducting transactions for the post office savings bank, insuring letters and parcels, etc. They must therefore have detailed knowledge of departmental regulations and procedures. They handle financial transactions and must account for and make good any shortage. Their daily work also brings them in contact with the public.

A certain number of the wicket clerks' grievances are common to postal clerks in general, and have already been examined in Part III of our Report. Therefore, we shall deal here only with those problems which are peculiar to wicket clerks.

(1) Each wicket clerk has, or should have, his own cash till. This is a departmental rule.

Apparently this rule is not always followed to the letter in some post offices. Thus, during peak periods or in the absence of other clerks and on orders from a supervisor or postmaster, two wicket clerks or one wicket clerk and a temporary helper may occasionally use the same till on the same day. The Department agrees that this practice cannot be tolerated. So do we.

It sometimes happens that a wicket clerk has to serve more than one wicket at a time, and this second practice seems just as improper to us. Each employee should use only his own till. If there are isolated cases, the wicket clerks involved should inform the postmaster or the district director, if necessary, so that they may stop this practice as soon as possible.

(2) The wicket clerks have a floater fund of \$25.00 which they say is insufficient. They pointed out inconveniences for both themselves and the patrons.

The Department states that if a wicket clerk needs more change it can be obtained from a main cash fund. However, sometimes this fund is not available for one reason or another when the wicket opens for business.

(3) We have mentioned that the wicket clerks have to account for and make good their cash shortage.

The present policy is, briefly, as follows:

- a) in every post office, each wicket clerk has a separate account in his name;
- b) under no circumstances whatsoever does a wicket clerk have the right to keep any part of the surplus cash receipts;
- c) any surplus of \$5.00 or less is credited to the wicket clerk's account in what is known as the post office "surplus cash fund";
- d) a surplus of more than \$5.00 must be reported to Headquarters;
- e) every shortage must be repaid in full by the clerk responsible. Shortages of \$5.00 or less may be made good from the amount to his credit in the surplus cash fund;
- f) however, the total amount to his credit may not exceed \$25.00 because the rule requires that any surplus balance over this amount must be reported to Headquarters. No clerk ever has more than this sum to his credit in his individual surplus account.

We can easily understand why the Department cannot allow all cash surpluses to be credited to the clerk. Such a policy would be contrary to the public interest. Moreover, the same policy applies in the private sector, particularly in banks. We believe, however, that the Department should raise from \$5.00 to \$10.00 the amount of shortage which may be repaid through surpluses, especially

if the Guarantee Fund is to be used only for the restricted purposes now in effect.^{1/}

The Department could moreover, without serious inconvenience, raise from \$25.00 to \$50.00 the amount permitted as the maximum credit possible to the wicket clerk's individual surplus account. It could also allow a clerk two or three days to raise the money to repay a non-fraudulent shortage.

(4) The wicket clerks undergo fairly regular audit team inspections.

Some have complained that they are not always informed of the errors uncovered by these inspections.

There is a contradiction here which we cannot understand. The Department claims that the audit inspection teams are required to obtain the signature of each wicket clerk on the audit report. If this is so, how can the clerk be unaware of his errors? The Department adds that according to its directives every error must be discussed with the clerk and irregularities are always brought to the attention of the postmaster who, in turn, clears the matter up with the clerk.

(5) Wicket clerks, except in certain cases, are held accountable for any stolen money orders they cash, or counterfeit money they accept.

The Department draws up a list of stolen money orders in numerical order and insists that clerks consult this list every time they cash a money order. If it does not appear on the list, the clerk is not held responsible provided he has checked the identity of the person, the correct amount inscribed and the date on which the stamp was affixed. Each case of counterfeit money accepted is studied on the basis of the quality of the counterfeit, the volume of business at the time the money was handled, previous incidents, if any, etc.

^{1/} See Chapter 28, "Guarantee Fund".

On the whole, we approve this method of assessing responsibility provided that the rules are not hard and fast and that each case is dealt with on its own merit. From now on, clerks will be able to make use of the grievance procedure if they are held responsible by the Department when they do not feel they should be.

(6) As a general rule, the Department requires clerks to check their till as soon as it reaches \$250.00. The Department admits that they do not always have the time to do so during normal working hours and that it is more difficult for them to trace an error after a prolonged length of time has elapsed.

We are under the impression that the vast majority of wicket clerks organize their work accordingly and overcome these difficulties without too much inconvenience.

(7) Clerks are sometimes told to take deposits to the bank. This happens only when the supervisor cannot do so himself. In our opinion, any clerk should be free to accept or refuse this task, because of the risk involved.

(8) The clerks suggest that wickets close at 5:30 p.m. at the latest, instead of 6:00 p.m.

The Department does not believe this is possible. In large urban centres the public is insisting that closing time be extended after 6:00 p.m. and the Department has acceded to some of these requests. It must be recognized that the trend today is towards later closing for commercial establishments on some weekdays.

(9) The clerks in some smaller post offices object to having to take two hours for lunch.

The Department understands, stating that these are exceptional cases. Normally wicket clerks work eight hours within a nine-hour period. However, this rule cannot always be followed in smaller post offices while, at the same

time, maintaining a satisfactory standard of postal service. In such cases, the work is carried out over a ten-hour period.

The Department should stop this practice and find other ways and means to resolve this problem.

(10) Several other minor problems were discussed, e.g., wicket clerks should be exempt from all sorting duties, so that they can always be available to the public, and should not answer telephone calls during peak periods.

We believe that these problems and others of the same nature can be solved amicably after discussions at the local joint committee level.

There is one problem, however, which will be settled soon: the Department is going to leave it to the patron to ask for parcel insurance. Clerks will no longer have to offer this insurance. The Department, however, refuses to discontinue the practice of supplying receipts for parcels valued at less than \$1.00 because patrons are not entitled to any indemnity without proof of mailing.

Frequent references were made, by way of comparison, to the working conditions of bank tellers.

Their situation seems different in many ways. The individual amount handled, the frequency of transactions, and the volume handled by tellers are far greater than that of wicket clerks. In a large office such as Toronto, the total cash transactions during the 1965 Christmas rush averaged only \$200.00 per clerk per day.

WE RECOMMEND:

218. That the Department ensure that all regulations affecting wicket clerks are adhered to, not only by postmasters and supervisors, but by the staff of its audit inspection teams.
219. That the Department increase from \$5.00 to \$10.00 the maximum amount which may be credited to a clerk's account out of his surpluses or excess cash.

220. That the Department continue to allow a clerk's shortages to be offset from his own account in the surplus cash fund, but that the maximum be raised from \$5.00 to \$10.00.
221. That the credit balance permissible in any clerk's individual account be raised from \$25.00 to \$50.00.
222. That a clerk be allowed two or three days to obtain funds needed to cover large deficits of a non-fraudulent nature.
223. That clerks be free to accept or refuse when asked to take deposits to the bank.
224. That wicket service be discontinued or reduced to a minimum in post offices where revenue between the hours of 5:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. is insufficient to meet the cost of staffing.
225. That other problems of lesser importance be solved locally after discussions at the local joint committee level.

CHAPTER 28

GUARANTEE FUND

Under section 5(1) (L) of the Post Office Act, the Postmaster General may "establish and maintain a fund derived from moneys received from postal employees and pay out of the fund losses sustained by reason of the default or neglect of any postal employee or mail contractor in carrying out his duties in any matter relating to the Canada Post Office".

In 1900 the Postmaster General availed himself of this provision for the first time and the Department became more or less the underwriter for employees, postmasters and contractors against the risks mentioned above.

In 1919, it was noted that the fund's reserves had reached \$300,000.00 and that the interest earned was more than enough to meet all losses. It was decided to discontinue the payment of premiums.

This requires further explanation.

The Department states that the books, at that time, showed a deficit of \$9,835.58 as compared to the total contributions paid by the employees, while there was a substantial surplus in payments from postmasters and contractors. When a guarantee fund is supported by the contributions of three separate groups, one can expect under the circumstances one of these groups to profit to a greater extent than another, even to the point of withdrawals exceeding contributions. One must bear in mind that the wicket clerks, for example, among all post office employees by the very nature of their work, are by far the most likely to make mistakes. This could be due to ordinary human errors or distractions.

In 1950, the Parliamentary Committee on Public Accounts expressed the opinion that the indemnities and compensations paid for losses occurring in the processing of the different types of mail, theft, counterfeit money, fraudulent withdrawals from the savings bank, or other misappropriations of the same nature should be considered as costs payable directly from the normal receipts of the Post Office Department and should not be charged to the guarantee fund.

This point of view was very defensible. Indeed, this is not the important question but what ensued which appears highly questionable.

Following this expression of opinion by the Parliamentary Committee on Public Accounts, discussions were held between the Departments of Finance, Justice and Post Office, resulting in a change of policy regarding future claims against the guarantee fund.

In 1953, it was considered logical and reasonable that charges against the guarantee fund be made only in cases of substantial losses due solely to the malfeasance of either a postmaster, an employee or a mail contractor. Even in these cases, it was decided that the fund would not be charged unless the person responsible was incapable of covering the losses.

We could not establish positively that this change in policy was discussed with the staff organizations. We strongly suspect that it was not. Perhaps this was because they had not contributed to the guarantee fund for the past 35 years, perhaps also because the benefits employees had received between 1900 and 1917 exceeded their contributions by almost \$10,000.

One fact is evident: this change in policy was decided without amending section 5(1) (L) of the Post Office Act.

During our investigation, and even if today there are probably only a few employees left who have contributed to the guarantee fund, we were asked to give an opinion on the whole problem.

The change in policy adopted in 1953 has obviously restricted the scope of this section. As evidence one needs only to point out that it once referred to "losses sustained by reason of the default or neglect" of an employee, whereas now the only mention made is that the fund covers only "substantial" losses resulting "solely" from "malfesance". These are far more than simple shades of meaning.

Section 5(1) (L) of the Act allows the Postmaster General full discretion on the establishment and maintenance of a guarantee fund. He may reach the conclusion, as we have, that the restrictions now in force are contrary to both the letter and intent of this section. If so, he may care to go one step further and consult the leaders of the staff organizations to determine if this fund should be re-established within the legal authority provided for in this section. We do not contemplate the possibility that the Postmaster General will liquidate the guarantee fund, outright. Such action would not be to anyone's advantage even if the fund is to serve only the limited purposes derived from the change of policy.

The national leaders of the staff organizations must realize that the re-establishment of a guarantee fund to protect employees against their own "default" or "neglect" will mean the compulsory payment of rather large premiums to maintain the fund on a solvent basis.

WE RECOMMEND:

226. That the Postmaster General decide if it is advisable to exercise the discretionary powers granted him by section 5(1) (L) of the Post Office Act and to re-establish, or not, the guarantee fund along the legal authority given in this section.
227. That, on the basis of his decision, the Postmaster General discuss with the national leaders of the staff organizations all aspects and implications of establishing and maintaining a guarantee fund for the protection of postal employees against losses arising from default or neglect in the carrying out of their duties.

These recommendations should not prevent the staff organizations from carrying out a study of other possible means of protection for the employees against the same (or other) risks as those mentioned in section 5(1) (L) of the Act. The Department should have no objection.

We must admit that many problems will arise:

- a) in many cases the company which will be the guarantor for each postal employee will probably insist on the right to demand reimbursement by the employee;
- b) this company will likely insist on being released from its obligations if the total claims go beyond a certain amount or if cash deficits occur too frequently;
- c) the premiums will surely be proportional to the amount of postal values entrusted to the employee.

It is not for us to dwell on this matter, nor to recommend any action whatever.

One single suggestion does come to mind: the national leaders of the staff organizations should not take any action on either one of these measures for the protection of employees without first carrying out a referendum among their members.

PART V

PROBLEMS OF PARTICULAR

INTEREST TO LETTER CARRIERS

CHAPTER 29

WALKS AND CHECKS

(1) The Department attempts to lay out a letter carrier's walk in such a way that the work to be done on his route, added to his daily duties inside the post office or postal station, are carried out within a 40-hour week.

This is not an easy task.

Many factors must be taken into consideration to lay out a walk on a basis as equitable as possible. Each walk has its own distinctive characteristics.

The main ones, but by no means the only ones, are:

- a) the topography of the route;
- b) its length;
- c) the distance between the post office and the starting point of the walk;
- d) the number of steps on stairways;
- e) the distance of homes from the sidewalk;
- f) the nature and volume of the mail which varies from day to day;
- g) the percentage of stops made during delivery;
- h) the public transportation schedules;
- i) the type and number of apartment and commercial buildings to be served, etc.

We shall not discuss unpredictable climatic conditions in the extreme which vary from one area of the country to another. Weather does not alter the layout of a walk, but it affects the number of hours the letter carrier takes to complete his route.

To alleviate the many problems affecting a walk, the Department, twice a year, has a check carried out by the letter carrier himself who then submits a report.^{1/} It also authorizes, throughout the year and at the letter carrier's request, "supervised" checks carried out by a third party (usually a supervisory letter carrier) to determine whether changes are necessary.

Letter carriers have criticized the whole system, calling it unrealistic. Others objected to the delays they were subjected to before obtaining a supervised check. All, or nearly all, to the astonishment of some district directors and postmasters, reproached the Department for setting any value on the carriers' semi-annual self-checks, explaining that, to keep out of trouble, they submit reports which are not too accurate.

The Department advised our Commission of its intention to undertake, without delay, a complete review of each walk by trained experts who, with the participation and co-operation of the letter carrier concerned, will analyse all the peculiarities of the walk and will endeavour to lay it out in a more realistic manner.

This task will take several months to complete as there are almost 7,200 routes to check. This is essential, nevertheless, and if properly carried out should provide excellent results.

Once the necessary adjustments are made, the Department will be able to do away with the semi-annual "self-checks" and will depend on "supervised checks" when warranted by changes, either in the opinion of the letter carriers concerned or of the Department.

^{1/} The Department categorically denies any intervention aiming either at reducing the volume of mail during these twice-yearly checks or at amending the statistics submitted by a letter carrier in his report. If this were so, it states it would not hesitate to deal severely with offenders.

It would be best to follow the same procedure, adapting it to circumstances, in the establishment of new walks.

(2) Many letter carriers suggested they should return to the post office, after completion of their walks.

We reject this suggestion for several reasons:

- a) First of all, we have the impression that the majority of letter carriers would not care for this because they appreciate the privilege they have been given of returning home, except in a few cases, as soon as the last letter is delivered. In all fairness, we must admit that there are a few months in the year (particularly in the summer, when the volume of mail is low) when a letter carrier finishes his day early. Some take advantage of this situation to take on various outside jobs to earn extra money.
- b) For all practical purposes, the obligation to return to the post office may mean nothing more than time lost returning to punch the clock and then leaving immediately.
- c) It may also mean that the Department will insist, once they are back at the post office, that they stay at work until the completion of their normal eight-hour day. But we are told that in many post offices it would be impossible to find work related to their duties. If this is possible we have the impression that some letter carriers, if not most of them, will give in to a very human temptation and not return until the last minute.
- d) Returning to the post office will probably involve additional checking on the part of the Department and create unnecessary expenditures.
- e) Finally, we are inclined to think that the letter carriers who made this suggestion were looking for a way of getting around the difficulty, if not the impossibility, they now encounter of being paid overtime for work done

beyond their normal hours. For reasons given further on in the Report,^{1/} we do not think that the problem of overtime should necessarily be connected with their compulsory return to the post office at the end of each day.

(3) The Department allows any letter carrier to start his work inside the post office 20 minutes before the official starting time. They are not paid for this time as it is not considered part of their normal working day.

In its submission in April 1966 the Letter Carriers' Union states that this extra 20 minutes is simply a "gift" from the letter carriers and that this practice should cease immediately.

We hesitate to agree with this proposal. This is far more the free and voluntary decision of each one concerned rather than a "gift". No one is forcing the letter carrier to take advantage of these extra 20 minutes. If he does, it is because he chooses to do so. Several letter carriers have explained the reason behind their decision: some feel that these extra 20 minutes allow them to work without rushing, others are older carriers who have difficulty in keeping up the sorting pace and thus gain precious time in processing the mail for their relay boxes. In some localities, it was alleged that some letter carriers use this extra time to be rated by their supervisors as more zealous employees. It was insinuated that these employees became the favourites or that they saw it as a means of obtaining promotion. Needless to say, the Department denies being involved in any such methods.

The letter carriers alone can settle this problem among themselves, at the local level. We do not want to become involved, even less, to recommend that the Department adopt regulations which will no longer allow any latitude to anyone. The Letter Carriers' Union will not, in this manner, stop abuses, if there are any.

^{1/} See Chapter 33, entitled "Overtime for Letter Carriers".

(4) Carriers recommended some changes in the methods of planning the walks, such as dividing them into five distinct categories or "squaring" them to reduce their length. We do not think that hard and fast rules can be applied. It would be better if the Department and the Letter Carriers' Union, at the national joint committee level, make every effort to agree to some basic criteria which could be used at the local level.

WE RECOMMEND:

228. That the Department undertake, with all possible dispatch, a complete review of each walk by trained experts.
229. That in each case this review be made with the participation and co-operation of the letter carrier concerned.
230. That once this review is completed, the twice-yearly "self-checks" be abolished and that "supervised" checks by trained experts take place only when necessary.
231. That the Department and the Letter Carriers' Union, at the national joint committee level, attempt to reach an agreement on the basic criteria required to establish walks and that these criteria be followed as much as possible in evaluating each walk at the local level.
232. That letter carriers not be compelled to return to the post office at the end of each day, except in cases already provided for in present directives and in cases mentioned in Chapter 33 on "Overtime for Letter Carriers".
233. That the authority now given by the Department to letter carriers to start work 20 minutes before the official starting time not be rescinded, but that the carriers themselves, in each post office, if they deem it advisable, decide by majority vote their stand in this matter.

CHAPTER 30

MAIL SORTING

(1) The letter carriers spent a great deal of time explaining why they oppose the alphabetical system of mail sorting referred to as the "ABC system" now in use. They prefer the "line of delivery" system in use several years ago.

With the alphabetical system, the sorting case is labelled according to the first letter of each street name. One section of the case is reserved for each street included in the letter carrier's walk. House numbers are shown above each case separation in delivery order. A coding system is used on the label to indicate the sequence in which the letter carrier withdraws mail from his case in accordance with the route pattern.

In the "line of delivery" system, the case is labelled in the exact order followed by the letter carrier along his route; so the mail is drawn in the same order, i.e., directly and consecutively, without the need of a code.

The Letter Carriers' Union claims that the alphabetical method was forced upon the letter carriers in 1963 after a trial period in a few localities, and that it has always been opposed to it because of the greater risks of error when the letter carrier ties out his mail for delivery.

The Department prefers the alphabetical system. It finds many advantages, including the following:

- a) The case, divided in two parts, allows two employees to work at the same time, thereby helping the regular letter carrier.
- b) Supervisors can locate addresses more easily.

- c) Sick relief carriers and casual employees, although unfamiliar with the case, sort the mail without difficulty. It is particularly useful, therefore, during the Christmas period when there is no time for an extended period of training.
- d) Checks carried out in Montreal and Toronto have convinced the Department that this system is more economical than the line of delivery system with regard to cost and labour, as well as time.

The Department concedes that the alphabetical system also has its disadvantages:

- a) It agrees with the carriers that the mail is not "pulled out" from the separation cases and tied out as quickly. But it claims that this inconvenience is more than offset by the speed of the simpler "ABC system".
- b) The Department agrees that this "pull out" and "tying out" require more constant attention on the part of the carriers since morning and afternoon deliveries are mixed. However, it feels that the order of delivery, identified by different colour schemes on the cases in the ABC system, reduces the risks of error and does not interfere with a reasonable check by supervisors.
- c) The Department agrees that the layout and labelling of the alphabetical sorting case are more complex and require more work than the "line of delivery" sorting case does.

Besides the fact that the Department and the Union do not agree with the facts and circumstances which led to the adoption of the alphabetical sorting system, we face a rather serious difference of opinion and we prefer to leave it to the parties concerned to settle it, once and for all. The opportunity will arise shortly with collective bargaining, even though the Department considers this matter to be one of determination of a work method, therefore non-negotiable.

Nevertheless, we suggest that the present alphabetical system be retained

because its rejection could seriously compromise the implementation of our recommendations on annual vacations. Since the letter carriers recognize the usefulness of the alphabetical sorting system during the Christmas period it will probably prove just as useful from June 15 to September 15.^{1/}

(2) Several other points deserve to be considered:

- a) The Department and the Union find that newspapers and periodicals are more rapidly sorted with the "line of delivery" system when using a separate case. This practice is already followed at several locations. If this is so, we feel that it should be extended wherever carriers so request.
- b) If the alphabetical sorting system remains, wing-type sorting cases should replace the straight-faced cases as soon as possible, since field tests have shown that the former reduce fatigue and make the reading of the labels easier.
- c) Walks should be adjusted to conform more readily to this type of case and labels should always be typed in large letters.
- d) The Department should urge municipalities to avoid giving the same name to different streets.

WE RECOMMEND:

234. That the alphabetical mail sorting system be retained for the time being.
235. That serious efforts be made by both parties to settle differences of opinion concerning this system.
236. That "line of delivery" sorting cases, for magazines and periodicals, be installed whenever carriers so request.
237. That no effort be spared to improve the alphabetical sorting system (if it is to be retained) in order to make it more acceptable to the letter carriers, e.g., wing-type cases, better layout of walks, elimination of identical street names, etc.

^{1/} See Chapter 13, section 1, "Vacation Leave".

CHAPTER 31

DELIVERY OF MAIL

The main grievances regarding daily delivery of mail refer, in general, to weight, volume, dimension and the variety of mail matter.

1. Maximum weight

In its brief of April 13, 1966, the Letter Carriers' Union recommends that the maximum weight which a letter carrier has to carry should not exceed 25 pounds. The Department has no set rule. It considers that a maximum of 35 pounds is reasonable but it does not think it is necessary to issue a directive along these lines. A letter carrier is always entitled to make a complaint to his supervisor if he considers the weight excessive and the supervisor has the authority to remedy the situation on the spot. Instructions to this effect have been issued. They are, however, a source of frequent conflict. Opinions with regard to what does or does not constitute an excessive weight are often divided and are the subject of lively, disagreeable, and sometimes bitter discussions.

The Department states that if the weight occasionally exceeds 35 pounds it is offset by the great number of times when it is less. We do not accept this line of reasoning.

A maximum weight should be established, regardless of the number of relay boxes available to the letter carrier, or the new methods of laying out and checking walks, which the Department intends to adopt.^{1/}

^{1/} See Chapter 29, "Walks and Checks".

WE RECOMMEND:

238. That the Department set 35 pounds as the maximum weight of mail any letter carrier should be required to carry.

2. Relay boxes

Letter carriers have at their disposal along their walks relay boxes located at strategic points. Before leaving the post office they sort and deposit a good part of their mail in "relay bags". Trucks transport these bags to the relay boxes where the letter carrier picks up his mail and proceeds with its delivery according to the established line of delivery.

The purpose of these boxes is twofold:

- a) to accelerate delivery by maintaining a regular flow of mail; and
- b) to ease the task of the letter carriers and obviate the need for frequent returns to the post office to pick up the mail intended for the next stage of their walks.

Number of relay boxes

The number of relay boxes is thus related to the problem of weight. Each letter carrier has an average of four or five relay boxes on his walk.

This, really, should not be a matter of averages since each walk has its own peculiarities. The Department does not deny this and states that district directors and postmasters can increase the number of relay boxes if necessary. The fact remains that several letter carriers told us that they had not obtained satisfaction. Here again, we are faced with differences of opinion with regard to the subjective evaluation of a requirement.

Transportation of mail to relay boxes

Some letter carriers believe that the Department should give them more time to prepare their relay bags. The Department holds the view that it cannot establish uniform departure schedules throughout the country because the volume and

the time of arrival of the mail vary from one locality to another. The relay bags must be prepared as soon as possible after the arrival of the letter carriers at the post office, otherwise, the latter may have to wait at the relay boxes, thereby causing a delay in the final stage of delivery.

We are under the impression that the real problem does not lie here. Many carriers claimed that some contractors, responsible for the transportation of the relay bags, have a tendency to reduce the number of trucks available for this purpose. The Department stated that the number of trucks does not depend, and should not depend, on the whim of the contractors, but entirely on the volume of work and distance. Contracts signed by the contractors do not give them any choice: they also assume the obligation to supply all additional trucks that may be required. We suggest that the representatives of the staff organizations take note of these remarks and notify the Department if any abuse in this connection occurs in any place. The Department assured our Commission that it would make sure such abuses are corrected without delay.

Snow clearing

The directives of the Department do not specify who is responsible for snow removal around relay boxes.

Since these boxes usually are located on municipal property the Department seeks the co-operation of the municipal services in charge of snow removal. It is not always successful and it recognizes that it has the responsibility to find a more efficient method.

WE RECOMMEND:

239. That postmasters ensure that each letter carrier has a sufficient number of relay boxes on his walk, and, if not, that immediate steps be taken to remedy the situation.

240. That the postmasters ensure that the contractors responsible for the transportation of mail to the relay boxes carry out their obligations to the letter, especially with regard to the number of trucks required and the hours of departure from the post offices in the morning.
241. That the Department take the necessary measures to have the snow removed around the relay boxes.

3. Rates

The Post Office Act^{1/} entrusts Parliament with the task of setting certain postage rates, such as the rates on letters, and on newspapers and periodicals which are considered first and second class mail matter. Other rates come under the jurisdiction of the Postmaster General.^{2/} He sets fees for registered mail, special delivery, C.O.D.'s, money orders and also parcel rates.

The Department pointed out that the classification of mail and the setting of rates could not be considered as working conditions.

We never believed it was otherwise and we do not hesitate to agree that these matters do not come within our mandate. However, even if employees must be willing to handle and deliver all mail matter, regardless of the rate or class, it does not mean that the Department should disregard suggestions which, even in this area, may improve the working conditions, welfare and morale of its operating staff.

The letter carriers associate the matter of postal rates with that of excessive loads, therefore they suggest the revision of the regulations concerning bulky commercial samples they have to carry, and which are mentioned further on in this chapter.^{3/}

^{1/} Sections 10, 11 and 12.

^{2/} Section 6, Post Office Act.

^{3/} See section 5.

Obviously, some problems are more ticklish, for instance:

- a) Letter carriers discussed Saturday work and suggested that a priority class of mail be set up and be the only class delivered on Saturdays.^{1/}
- b) Postal employees claimed that the rates on third class mail (printed matter and commercial samples) were not sufficient to cover its handling cost. They recommended a uniform rate, higher than the present one, and that the additional revenue be used to improve physical working conditions and distribution methods.
- c) Nearly everyone criticized the cost involved in the handling of second class mail which amounts to \$30 million more than the revenue derived from it.

It should be noted that on April 1, 1964, the Department increased the rates on third class mail and that it does not see the need for a further increase at the present time. The funds required for the operation of the Department come either from postal revenue or from moneys voted by Parliament, if the latter considers it necessary to subsidize a particular category of mail.

- d) Employees raised some questions on foreign postal rates.

In a few countries postal revenues are considered to be a legitimate source of revenue, in others, the postal service is a public utility subsidized through the over-all budget. Elsewhere, postal administrations try to meet their own expenses. Even in such cases, rates differ from country to country depending on the quality of the service, the state of the economy, the cost of labour, etc. In the United States the law recognizes some sections of the postal service as a public service and adjustments are made in revenue and in increased expenditures, without considering the losses and expenditures attributable to these adjustments.

^{1/} See Chapter 10, section 2, "Week-end Work".

WE RECOMMEND:

242. That Headquarters make sure that postmasters comply with existing instructions dealing with the order of priority for classes of mail, especially regarding the leeway allowed to classes other than first class mail.

4. Parcel post

The directives from the Department state that items weighing over two pounds or having a volume exceeding 150 cubic inches are to be delivered by truck. To reach this weight or this volume certain combinations are allowed. Thus, it allows two or more mail items intended for the same address to be bundled. If these items exceed the limit and in his opinion become a burden, the letter carrier may ask permission to have this mail consigned to parcel post delivery.

Evidently, there are postmasters and supervisors who do not like to compromise and who insist on checking the smallest detail to avoid these combinations. There is room here for a little more common sense and concern for the welfare of the employee; after all, these concessions do not harm the postal service or in any way affect the patrons.

WE RECOMMEND:

243. That postmasters interpret more generously the directives on delivery by parcel post of mail matter exceeding two pounds or where the volume exceeds 150 cubic inches and that it be so for all possible combinations of these items.

5. Second and third class mail

(1) The Department requires letter carriers to deliver all the mail irrespective of class and has the right to do so in so far and as long as the Post Office Act and the Regulations remain unchanged.^{1/}

^{1/} See section 3.

Nevertheless, letter carriers feel no pride whatever in delivering certain categories of mail, e.g., circulars, catalogues with or without addresses, directories, free samples, etc.

Apart from being a source of revenue, the Department considers it is its responsibility to provide this service. We shall not argue the point but it is reasonable to presume that the letter carriers be entitled to overtime remuneration if they are required to work overtime in order to meet all the requirements of the Department. This matter is discussed in Chapter 33.^{1/}

(2) There is, however, a particular aspect of the problem which should be mentioned. The Department accepts as mail matter samples of some products of industrial or commercial establishments which the latter want to distribute to the public.^{2/} These samples, which are sometimes bulky, cause an unnecessary burden to the letter carriers and we believe that they should not be considered as mail matter with which the Canada Post Office should be concerned.

(3) The fact that carriers have to handle the delivery of second or third class mail, as if it were first class, affects their working hours.

The Department considers the time element of prime importance in the case of some publications. Daily newspapers and weekly magazines are processed and delivered as expeditiously as possible, without, however, affording them the same treatment as first class mail. Publishers and subscribers expect prompt delivery. The Department states that failure to do so would lead to numerous complaints. Some newspapers already have published editorials concerning the irregular delivery of their copy.

The Department states that third class mail (printed matter and trade samples) comes under a totally different regulation: it allows a margin of 24 hours

^{1/} See Chapter 33, "Overtime for Letter Carriers".

^{2/} Trade samples such as soaps, toothpastes, cereals, etc.

for the processing of this class of mail as compared with one or two hours for first class. The Department further emphasizes that supervisors may authorize letter carriers to delay the delivery of third class items when the volume of first class mail is clearly above normal. It admits, however, that this situation differs from one locality to another because, within the limits of some defined priorities, the postmaster, at his discretion, decides on the manner in which the various classes of mail are to be processed.

WE RECOMMEND:

244. That the Department review its policy concerning the delivery of bulky trade samples.
245. That the Department remind postmasters to be more flexible in the degree of priority afforded second and third class mail.

6. Two deliveries a day

The letter carriers, supported by the postal clerks, suggest that the Department re-establish the system of two deliveries per day in residential areas.

This system was abolished in 1951, because the small quantity of mail to be delivered in the afternoon could no longer justify its continuation. Since then, the Department has studied its re-establishment on several occasions. It assures the Commission that the situation has not changed in any appreciable manner, and that the advantages resulting from it, for a restricted number of patrons, could not justify the prohibitive cost involved in returning to the two-delivery system.^{1/} Even though it is true that the walks of the letter carriers would necessarily be shortened, they would theoretically, all factors being considered, always be required to cover the same total distance and to work an average of

^{1/} According to the Department, a return to the system of two deliveries per day would mean an additional cost of over \$15 million per year.

eight hours per day. As far as the postal clerks are concerned they would benefit only in so far as the Department would revise its policy on time schedules, which, as we have already pointed out,^{1/} is based upon the arrival and departure schedules of air, railway and road transportation.

In the light of these circumstances we do not recommend any change.

7. Changes of address

Letter carriers complain about the cost and additional work required by the double delivery and the double sorting of improperly addressed mail matter.

We have already taken a position on the subject of postage rates.^{2/}

We cannot see how the letter carriers can avoid this additional work. It should be emphasized, as a matter of information, that the Department sees no need to deal too rigorously with the patron who has neglected to notify his correspondent of his change of address within the 90 days time limit prescribed by the Postal Guide. The Department further declares that the proposal made by the letter carriers to charge the patron an additional amount would not lessen their work since they themselves would have to collect the postage due from the addressee.

WE RECOMMEND:

246. That a maximum time limit of more than 90 days if necessary but not more than 180 days be rigorously enforced, in future, for changes of address.

8. Interpretation of regulations

Without enumerating all other grievances presented by the letter carriers, i.e., two addresses on the same mail matter (street and post office box number), redirected mail, or sending bags to the relay boxes in the afternoon, it seems

^{1/} See Chapter 10, "The Work Week".

^{2/} See section 3.

obvious, after discussion with the Department, many of these are the result of an erroneous or too rigorous interpretation of rules by the local authorities.

The period of a rather sudden transition, in recent years, from one of centralization to one of delegation of a good degree of authority and responsibility to local and regional management of the field operating services has created some problems. We would like to say, once more, that better training and more experience will lead to a better understanding, by all levels of administration, of the immense advantages of maintaining good staff relations with all personnel, and to the use of its discretionary powers bearing in mind the welfare of the employees. The constant recourse to consultation and exchange of views through local joint committees and, if necessary, to the new grievance procedure will also be an important factor in the solution of these problems.^{1/}

Address labels

Many letter carriers are of the opinion that address labels for magazines and circulars are not large enough to write changes of address legibly. The Department believes it would not be reasonable to expect the publishers to replace these labels, because they have invested considerable sums in the necessary equipment.

Mail to "occupant"

In some localities, letter carriers were critical of mail items which carry not only the recipient's address but also "or occupant" on the envelope. Regulations require that the mail be delivered to whoever is resident at the indicated address. Letter carriers say this is a bone of contention with the "occupants". The latter think that they are being "forced" to accept mail which is not really intended for them.

^{1/} See Chapter 4, "General Impressions".

The Department insists on maintaining the current practice. This is its prerogative and we can do nothing about it. Letter carriers must accept this policy even though it may cause some hardship. The abolition of the "or occupant" mail delivery would leave only three alternatives: return the item to the mailer if he so requests, dispose of it in the "Undeliverable Mail Office", or redirect the item to the new address of the addressee. All these alternatives would be costly for the Department. They would also make more work for employees, apart from the fact that the mailers would not have the benefit of a service they have paid for and to which they are therefore entitled.

Apartment buildings

The letter carriers want mailers to include the addressee's apartment number along with the street address. This problem has become more acute in recent years. Apartment buildings with one hundred or more suites are very much the trend. The presence of several families with the same surname does not make things any easier. The Department recognizes this problem and is endeavouring to find a practical solution.

WE RECOMMEND:

247. That the Department institute a campaign to educate the public on the regulations pertaining to the addressing of mail.

9. Miscellaneous

Suspension of delivery notification card

In carrying out their daily duties, the letter carriers often have to face difficulties or dangers for which they are in no way responsible: snow piled up on the sidewalk of homeowners, slippery steps, loose dogs, narrow slots in mail boxes, etc. The letter carriers suggest that they be allowed to drop a card into the mail box advising the patron of the reasons for non-delivery, instead of the

present and slower method of sending a personal letter from the postmaster.

This is an interesting suggestion as long as the Department is careful to word this card in precise terms. The public has its share of responsibility. The small minority who disregard the rules should not be allowed to get off scot-free all of the time.

Enquiries

The Department sometimes requests letter carriers to question patrons in order to obtain information unrelated to the postal service. These requests are unjustified since they cannot be related either directly or indirectly to their normal duties.

Classification of mail

At Ottawa, employees suggested that federal departments give greater care to the classification of mail in different classes, in accordance with the Postal Guide.

The Post Office Department recently notified all departments accordingly.

WE RECOMMEND:

248. That the Department put to the test suspension of delivery notification cards in cases of non-delivery of mail.
249. That postmasters and supervisors take into account requests by the letter carriers, when they recommend suspension of mail delivery to a patron who continually ignores departmental regulations.
250. That the Department no longer request letter carriers to make enquiries of the patrons, when such enquiries are not related to the postal service proper.
251. That all federal departments give very clear instructions to their personnel on the classification and use of various classes of mail.

CHAPTER 32

MAILMOBILES

The Department uses jeeps to deliver the mail in some suburban, business, and industrial areas where the volume of mail and distances make delivery on foot completely impractical.

In all likelihood, this mode of delivery will continue to expand.

(1) The Department claims to be in constant contact with the jeep manufacturers. Through experience and consultation, it has obtained their agreement that recently acquired vehicles should be better adapted to this type of delivery and be equipped with the necessary safety features.

(2) The Department has made arrangements with private companies regarding maintenance. It admits that in certain localities the results have been less than satisfactory. The Department has now been authorized by Treasury Board to deal exclusively with the manufacturers' authorized repair centres. Negotiations with them are now under way. There is every reason to believe that, shortly, maintenance and repair services will be faster and of a higher quality.

(3) The Department has also informed the Commission that it intends to replace a good number of its older vehicles in the current year. This news certainly will be welcomed by many letter carriers.

(4) We are concerned, however, about those used vehicles which will be operated for some time to come but which are not in the best of working condition and which are not as well equipped as the newer vehicles.

The Department would do well to undertake, immediately, a complete and detailed inspection of these vehicles and, if necessary, allocate to the district

directors or postmasters any additional funds required to have essential repairs made and to have installed any equipment which is absolutely necessary.

(5) It was suggested that letter carriers who operate mailmobiles should be paid a premium of 15 cents per hour.

The Department claims:

- a) that these extra responsibilities are already included in the standard duties for this class of letter carrier;
- b) that they have been taken into account in the present pay structure;
- c) that the use of a mailmobile results in less physical effort than delivery on foot.

Whether or not these claims are valid, we feel that these letter carriers assume additional responsibilities which deserve due consideration. However, we are not convinced that a differential of some sort is a desirable solution. There should be a careful review made of the job classification and a readjustment of the basic wage if it is considered justified.^{1/}

(6) When a "foot walk" is changed to a "jeep route", the Department usually offers it to the letter carrier with the most seniority, provided he knows how to drive. Some letter carriers have suggested that first choice should be given to the carrier on that particular walk.

We do not support this proposal. The Department is quite right in acting as it does, since it is respecting the seniority rights.

^{1/} We remind those letter carriers who are concerned regarding their responsibility toward third party liability in the event of an accident that the regulations adopted by virtue of the Crown Liability Act (R.S., 1952/53, c.30) protect them. However, these regulations permit the Crown, when it has compensated a third party, to claim repayment of a part of this indemnity from the employee to a maximum of \$250.00.

WE RECOMMEND:

252. That the Department immediately undertake a detailed inspection of mailmobiles, especially those that have been in operation for a year or more.
253. That these inspections take place in the presence and with the assistance of at least one representative of the Letter Carriers' Union.
254. That in every case where it is deemed necessary, the Department allocate to the district directors or postmasters any additional funds required to have essential repairs made and equipment installed when absolutely required.
255. That the Bureau of Classification Revision examine carefully the classification of mailmobile drivers.

CHAPTER 33

OVERTIME FOR LETTER CARRIERS

(1) Of all the problems of particular interest to the letter carriers, none is more important than overtime.

We have already pointed out several difficulties they must face. To some extent, these are beyond their control or that of the Department.^{1/} The varying volume of mail and weather conditions are the two major difficulties.

Therefore, with the exception of the Christmas period, after a walk check, or the day after a statutory holiday, letter carriers do not, as a rule, receive any overtime pay.

This is not normal and we do not accept the Department's claim that the light months of the year offset the heavy ones.

WE RECOMMEND:

256. That letter carriers be entitled to overtime whenever the volume of mail to be delivered is heavier than usual or if weather conditions are abnormal, unfavourable, or difficult and they have to work overtime.

This recommendation shows our great confidence in the inborn honesty of letter carriers. We are giving them the same confidence which the Department shows during the Christmas period when it does not require them to return to the office on the same day to report their overtime. The purpose of our recommendation is

^{1/} See Chapter 29, "Walks and Checks", and Chapter 31, "Delivery of Mail".

to not leave to the sole judgment of a postmaster, district director or any other official at Headquarters, the responsibility to decide the effect of sudden or abnormal conditions on the daily task of a letter carrier.

We leave it to those concerned to reach an understanding on the procedure to be followed for the enforcement of this recommendation.

We would like to make a few suggestions, however.

- a) In the case of "abnormal, unfavourable or difficult weather conditions", we can easily see representatives of local branches asking the postmaster or his delegate to recognize such conditions prior to the departure of the letter carriers and to authorize, beforehand, the payment of the extra time they might have to take to deliver the mail.
- b) Failing an agreement, the local branch representatives merely request the postmaster or his delegate to take note of their representations.
- c) When the mail volume is "heavier than usual", the letter carrier concerned discusses it with his supervisor and puts forward his request. If it is refused then it should be done in writing.
- d) We think there is room for officials to show discretion in requesting letter carriers to return to the post office at the end of the day. But it is difficult to understand that such time is not counted as overtime. The Department will perhaps find this to be another reason for relying entirely on the carrier and accept that he register his overtime on the following day.
- e) Any problem created by this recommendation remaining without a solution, which would be acceptable to either side, can be submitted through the grievance procedure and, if need be, to final binding adjudication.
- f) To avoid any abuse by a very small minority, provision must be made for strict disciplinary action to be taken against any letter carrier who claims overtime, but fails to carry out his duties as he should.

(2) Our recommendation also applies to relieve supervisory letter carriers. These, however, have a different problem for the simple reason that they are not as familiar with the walks as the regular carriers. The Department admits there may be grounds for overtime in such cases. Under any other circumstances, it will not do so, claiming that the balance is re-established when other walks are completed in less than eight hours. It states furthermore that these additional responsibilities are taken into account in the higher pay scale for relief supervisory letter carriers.

In our opinion, the difference between the salary of the letter carrier and that of the supervisory letter carrier^{1/} is not sufficient to compensate him for the overtime he has to put in. The main reason for a difference in salary is the wider knowledge needed to cover more than one walk.

WE RECOMMEND:

257. That relief supervisory letter carriers, besides being granted overtime under the same conditions as letter carriers, be entitled to overtime when they work additional hours because they are not as familiar with the walks as the regular letter carriers.

(3) Some letter carriers believe that they should be paid a proportional amount of overtime when the postal clerks work additional hours sorting mail.

An increase in the volume of processed mail does not necessarily mean an increase in the work of the letter carrier: instead of delivering only one item at a particular address, he may deliver several without necessarily taking any more time. Our recommendation, moreover, takes care of any problem related to any possible overload of work.

(4) On many occasions, some complaints were received on the practice of

^{1/} This difference amounts to \$41.25 per month, at the maximum of the class.

stopping immediately payment of overtime for a walk where the need for overtime has already been recognized, as soon as the regular letter carrier leaves this walk and until the new incumbent has familiarized himself with the walk and is able to prove his own claims for overtime pay.

When a walk is recognized as being "with overtime", the Department should not disregard this fact solely because this walk has become available to other carriers. It recognizes this now and agrees to stop this practice: from now on, recognized overtime will be maintained in favour of the new letter carrier until the walk has been revised.

WE RECOMMEND:

258. That the Department immediately implement its new policy of approving recognized overtime for a walk in favour of a new letter carrier until the walk has been revised.

(5) Some letter carriers stated that they must arrive at the office 20 or 30 minutes before the official starting time to count and weigh the mail during supervised check weeks.

Headquarters does not approve and claims that this work is the responsibility of the supervisor in charge of the check. No letter carrier, therefore, has to arrive at his place of work before the official starting time. Should he be asked to do so, we believe that the right to overtime should then be recognized.

(6) When a letter carrier on a "jeep route" meets with an accident, a mechanical breakdown, a blowout, etc., he must wait until the approved contractor arrives to make the repairs or he takes other necessary steps.

It seems reasonable that this loss of time should be part of his normal working day and that any additional hours be counted as overtime.

WE RECOMMEND:

259. That a letter carrier on a "jeep route" be entitled to claim overtime whenever he is compelled to work overtime because of a mechanical breakdown or other mishap.

CHAPTER 34

DOGS

Pertinent, but unkind remarks have been made about dogs, those good friends of the letter carriers. In recent years an average of 600 dog-bites have been reported annually by the Post Office to the Department of Labour and certified as workmen's injuries of a more or less serious nature.

Letter carriers have suggested the use of a repellent similar to the one now available to carriers in the United States.

Without endorsing this suggestion fully, at this time, the Department promised to give it a trial in different localities and to obtain a report from the U.S. postal authorities on the effectiveness of this product. No doubt it will, and in due course, inform the Letter Carriers' Union of the results of its experiments and research in this connection and with its co-operation try to find as satisfactory a solution as possible.

In 1956, Headquarters issued precise instructions to clarify the procedure to be followed when a dog prevents a letter carrier from delivering the mail. If these instructions were always followed properly by supervisors, there would be fewer regrettable incidents and not so many grievances. One should not hesitate to suspend delivery of mail where any patron refuses or neglects to give adequate protection to the carrier against attacks from a vicious, dangerous, or menacing dog.

Headquarters intends to reissue its instructions soon through a formal directive.

WE RECOMMEND:

260. That postmasters and immediate supervisors rigorously comply with the instructions issued by Headquarters in 1956, to ensure that carriers receive all necessary protection against the ever-present possibility of being bitten while carrying out their duties.
261. That supervisors do not hesitate to discontinue the delivery of mail, immediately it becomes evident that a patron refuses or neglects to provide adequate protection to the carrier from the possible attacks of a vicious, dangerous, or menacing dog.
262. That postmasters maintain closer liaison with municipal authorities and require that all relevant by-laws be strictly enforced.
263. That Headquarters report, as soon as possible, on the results of its investigation into the advisability of making available to those letter carriers, who so wish, a repellent which would offer better protection against dogs and that, should the report prove favourable, a policy be adopted to that effect after agreement by the Letter Carriers' Union.

CHAPTER 35

SEASONAL CHANGES OF UNIFORM

Letter carriers want to be left free to change from their summer to their winter uniforms, or vice versa, as they see fit. At present this cannot be done without permission from the postmaster.

In Ottawa, for the last few months, the setting of the date for seasonal changes of uniforms has been left to the discretion of the carriers' immediate supervisors.

Headquarters has no objection to authorizing each carrier to decide for himself when he wants to make a seasonal change. It believes, however, that its policy regarding the wearing of the different seasonal hats should be maintained: some uniformity in appearance is desirable since it facilitates the identification of the carrier. We will not discuss this point further since we are convinced that letter carriers will be satisfied with the general attitude taken by the Department.

WE RECOMMEND:

264. That the Department issue a directive to the effect that each individual letter carrier make his own decision regarding the date for seasonal changes of uniforms, except regarding the wearing of the hats.

PART VI

PROBLEMS OF PARTICULAR INTEREST

TO RAILWAY MAIL CLERKS

CHAPTER 36

JOB SECURITY

Whenever representatives of a local branch of the Railway Mail Clerks Federation appeared before our Commission, they mentioned their fears and apprehensions about the departmental policy of gradually abolishing the railway mail service.^{1/}

They say that the Department tacitly assured them of permanent employment when entering the Civil Service. As many have devoted the best years of their lives to the postal service, it is easily understood why they are disturbed by the insecurity of their position. They seek at least assurance, if not a formal guarantee, that, as other railway mail services are eliminated, the Department will grant them the right to transfer to other positions within the district, without loss of seniority or salary. Finally, they do not want compulsory retirement because they are not responsible for the consequences of decisions taken by the Department since they have entered the Service.

Until now, the Department has treated with fairness those railway mail clerks whose positions have been abolished. They have been assigned other responsibilities in post offices, they retained their classification and salary rate, and kept their seniority rights. The only condition set by the Department is that they must apply for any vacancy occurring in the railway mail service within their district at their grade or one grade higher. If they do not apply, they are downgraded but

^{1/} The number of positions has decreased from 1,400 in 1957 to 347 in 1966.

retained in the postal service.

However, despite all its sympathy for the railway mail clerks, the Department does not see how it can possibly guarantee them permanent employment. It considers it has to keep pace with the rapid progress of modern technology and if necessary abolish positions in favour of a more efficient and economical operation of the postal service.

There are two other aspects to this problem.

The first one, of concern to the Civil Service Commission, results from the pay conversion rules of the program being carried out by the Bureau of Classification Revision. Surplus railway mail clerks who are assigned to post offices and who are not performing the duties of their previous classification are considered as "over-classified employees" and are automatically placed in a "holding" class. They will not benefit from any future cyclical salary revision until such time as the maximum rate of their positions either reaches or exceeds the existing rate.

The second one refers to a disagreement on seniority rights which arose recently between the Union of Postal Workers and the Federation. This matter has been fully discussed elsewhere in the Report.^{1/}

WE RECOMMEND:

265. That the Department adhere to its policy regarding surplus railway mail clerks and thus provide them with maximum reasonable security in any new position they might assume.

^{1/} See Chapter 12, "Seniority".

CHAPTER 37

HOURS OF WORK AND OVERTIME

1. Hours of work

Railway mail clerks work on the basis of a 40-hour week and the Department calculates their annual salary accordingly.

Due to some peculiarities of the railway mail service, railway mail clerks in the normal carrying out of their duties are not employed on a regular basis. They may work from 50 to 60 hours one week and 20 to 30 hours the next. The Department, in accordance with the Civil Service Regulations ^{1/} and the Canadian Labour (Standards) Code ^{2/} introduced for this class a theoretical "averaging out" system based on the whole year (yearly potential). Each year at the beginning of April, it determines the number of hours of work required of the railway mail clerks until the end of March of the following year. In any given year, for instance, this calculation will tell the railway mail clerks, beforehand, that the potential number of working hours should amount to a total of 1,888 hours or 236 days of work for the year.

Departmental statistics, on the other hand, show that a railway mail clerk is normally on duty 49 weeks in a year and that, on the basis of the yearly potential of 1,888 hours, his weekly average is 38 hours and 32 minutes. Hence, on the basis of the recognized system, we have "under hours" which do not mean, however, a reduction in salary. In other words, whether

^{1/} Section 10.

^{2/} Section 5.

the total hours of work as calculated by the Department reach 40 hours per week or not, the railway mail clerk receives full salary.

We asked the Department if it had ever considered adopting a different system for the calculation and scheduling of working hours for railway mail clerks. The Department stated that it had already contemplated the scheduling of work and setting of pay scales on the basis of mileage. It shelved the project and did not discuss it officially with the Federation because the operation of the railway mail service in the future appeared too doubtful and because the Bureau of Classification Revision of the Civil Service Commission has, in the meantime, begun the study to which we referred previously.^{1/} The Department added that any reduction in weekly hours of work would mean a proportional reduction in salary levels. We do not believe this to be necessarily so.

This brief outline emphasizes the complexity of the problem of hours of work for railway mail clerks.^{2/} A complete solution must be found, i.e., a solution which will take into account all related factors. It is best to leave it to the parties concerned who, during the forthcoming negotiations, will be free to scrutinize every aspect of the problem and analyse its implications on the whole. This decision appears much more sensible since neither the national leaders of the Federation nor the railway mail clerks submitted their recommendations in a comprehensive and orderly manner. If we intervene formally on a particular point of some importance, but without having regard to the problem as a whole, we might worsen or confuse the situation.

There is, however, an anomaly of secondary importance which can be corrected immediately and without trouble.

^{1/} See Chapter 9, "Classification of Positions".

^{2/} In this chapter and the next, we refer to other problems which also affect hours of work, at least indirectly.

At the present time, the Department does not pay railway mail clerks a night differential for time spent on trains because of late arrival. Night differential is paid only on the basis of the official time-table. If the train is due in at midnight but for one reason or other arrives at 3 a.m., the clerks, even though they remain on duty, are not granted night differential for those last three hours. We see no valid justification for such a policy.

WE RECOMMEND:

266. That the Department henceforth pay night differential to railway mail clerks for all hours of work during which they have remained on duty in the railway mail car.

2. Overtime

Uneven scheduling of working hours for railway mail clerks over the year also creates overtime problems.

(1) Excluding December, railway mail clerks receive practically no cash payment for overtime for the simple reason that the Department does this only once a year and only if time-off compensation granted during the eleven months has not been sufficient to balance the required number of normal hours of work foreseen.

The Department objects to the expression "time-off compensation". As far as it is concerned it allows railway mail clerks, if necessary, either "lieu-days" or "lay-off days" to bring the number of hours worked within the limits of their annual potential. Thus, when the Department sees that in a given district some clerks have worked, or may have to work a greater number of hours than others, it calls on duty the clerks with the lesser number of hours, often relief clerks, and grants what it calls "lieu-days" or "lay-off days" to the others.^{1/}

^{1/} The difference in meaning between "lieu-days", "lay-off days" and "days off" seems rather subtle.

Railway mail clerks find fault with this practice. They suggest that overtime, earned during the summer months when they double up to enable as many clerks as possible to go on vacation, be paid for in cash at the end of September.^{1/}

The Department believes this proposal is neither fair nor practical. It points out that the fixed establishment of railway mail clerks in a postal district is never exceeded. It is its responsibility, as a careful and conscientious administrator, to see that even the relief staff reaches its own annual potential and, while meeting the requirements of the railway mail service, to minimize overtime expenditure as much as possible.

(2) With regard to December overtime, which is paid for in cash at the end of the month, the Department points out that this policy came into being at a time when the mail volume handled by railway mail clerks during the month was much greater than it is now and clerks had to make a greater number of trips than was normally the case.^{2/} Later, following protests from the Federation, the Department ruled that an exception could be made to the above-mentioned overtime compensation system and for that month the extra hours worked by the railway mail clerks would be paid in cash.

The Department has no intention of going back on its decision but it claims that the situation during the summer months cannot be compared with either that of December a few years back or with that of more recent December months.

^{1/} Normally, the Department compensates for these additional hours of work by granting "lay-off days" or "lieu-days" liquidated in January, February or March.

^{2/} The necessity of hiring during December additional clerks with little experience also required the Department to take precautionary measures to maintain railway mail service at its normal level and, consequently, to call for more hours of work on the part of full-time clerks.

This is a serious matter and, as we said before, we believe that the Department and the Federation should try to settle the matter during the forthcoming collective bargaining negotiations. The possibility of breaking the year into three or four distinct cycles and providing for payment in cash of overtime in every cycle is worthy of detailed examination before being discarded.

(3) There is an anomaly, however, which the Department should hasten to rectify. Unlike most employees in the Public Service, railway mail clerks do not receive cash compensation at time-and-a-half when they work on a statutory holiday.

WE RECOMMEND:

267. That the Department pay railway mail clerks compensation at time-and-a-half for all work performed on a statutory holiday.

CHAPTER 38

MILEAGE ALLOWANCE AND LAYOVER TIME

In our opinion these two problems are related, but we will first consider them separately.

1. Mileage allowance

A few years ago, the Department approved a mileage allowance of one cent per mile to compensate railway mail clerks for the cost of accommodation and meals when they have to remain away from their normal place of residence.^{1/} In 1951, this allowance was increased to one and one half cents per mile.

Railway mail clerks claim that this rate is clearly inadequate. They refer to the increase in the cost of living over the last 15 years and suggest an increase to 2, 2½ and even 3 cents per mile.

The Department has already discussed this problem with the Federation. It has not until now agreed with their suggestions because it is convinced that the mileage allowance as such is no longer adequate for the majority of railway mail clerks. The Department believes a different system is required such as:

- a) payment of actual expenses incurred within reasonable limits;
- b) payment of a per diem allowance on the basis of local rates; or
- c) payment of a number of hours per day in each case of layover at away-from-home terminals.

^{1/} Railway mail clerks claim that this compensation has also been granted as an incentive to take on the job. The Department rejects this claim.

2. Layover time

Railway mail clerks claim also that time credited by the Department as normal working hours while at away-from-home terminals is insufficient.

At present, the hours spent in away-terminals are deducted from the total hours in a round trip, and railway mail clerks receive one-third of the difference.^{1/}

The Department states that this formula was developed as a result of representations made by the Federation. The following are the reasons^{2/} and basic explanations by the Department:

- a) It is part of the normal working conditions of a railway mail clerk to have to spend off-duty or rest time (known as "layover") at an away-from-home terminal while waiting to make the return trip.
- b) This layover time can be accumulated to the point where the railway mail clerk is adversely affected because it becomes almost impossible for him to reach his yearly potential hours of work. This is particularly so in the case of the clerk working on short runs with long layovers: although away from home and off-duty during these hours he cannot undertake any other run.
- c) This is why, in order to compensate for excessive layover,^{3/} it is advisable to grant the railway mail clerk time credit based on the ratio of "work to rest" over a 24-hour period, or eight hours of work

^{1/} For instance, if a clerk spends 23 hours away from home during a 20-hour round trip, he receives credit for one hour.

^{2/} Many railway mail clerks are unaware of the basic reason for this formula established by the Department.

^{3/} When layover is equal or inferior to round trip time, the Department regards it as normal and equivalent to a period of reasonable and necessary rest. In such instances it does not pay any compensation.

out of 24, or one-third of the total. Such is the basis for the above calculation.

Let us consider some practical results of the application of both formulas.^{1/}

The railway mail clerk on the Ottawa-Toronto train has a total layover of 37 hours and 30 minutes in Toronto on week-ends for which he receives only \$7.35. The clerk on the Montreal-Toronto run receives \$10.05 for a layover of 37 hours and 45 minutes on week-ends but he receives also \$10.05 for a layover of 12 hours and 30 minutes on week days. The clerk on the La Malbaie-Quebec train is entitled to \$2.64 for a layover of 22 hours and 35 minutes on week-ends. On the other hand, the clerk on the Quebec-Senneterre train receives \$11.76 for a layover of 8 hours and 5 minutes while the clerk on the Montreal-North Bay run gets \$10.32 for 7 hours and 35 minutes.

These figures indicate how important it has become to revise both formulas or to replace them by another one altogether. Neither one nor the other, considered as a whole or separately, meets today's needs. The mileage allowance proves inadequate in several cases if we consider it exclusively as an allowance for room and board expenses. The method of calculating layover allowance seems rather arbitrary and lacks a sound basis. Nevertheless, considering the last two examples given by the Department, the two formulas put together may occasionally look like extra pay, at least in part.

A complete review of the situation offers several alternatives. Among the most impressive are the possibility of including the mileage allowance in the basic salary, to cancel the layover allowance, and to pay

^{1/} The Department provided the Commission with statistics quoted in the next paragraph.

a travel allowance based either on the cost of living in each district or locality, or simply on the payment of actual expenses for room and board.

WE RECOMMEND:

268. That the Department and the Federation of Railway Mail Clerks meet, as soon as possible, to come to a mutual agreement on the most appropriate method of combining mileage and layover allowances.

CHAPTER 39

DEAD-HEADING

Railway mail clerks suggested that when they leave their place of residence to work on runs originating away from home (dead-heading) they be given a travel allowance for travelling to and from their headquarters, regardless of the nature and duration of the outside assignment. They also suggested that such "away from home" assignments be of short duration.

The Department states that it does count "dead-heading" time as working hours except when a clerk lives in a locality other than the terminal point from which he normally starts his run. Nevertheless, when a clerk travels in a railway mail car, from his place of residence to the terminal where he is to start his run and vice versa, he is paid a mileage allowance. If he travels in another section of the train, on the authority of his district director, he is given a pass and submits an expense account. The Department believes its policy is fair and reasonable. Regarding the suggestion made by the railway mail clerks on the duration of assignments at away-terminals, it points out that this is part of the normal duties of a relief clerk, that he has to acknowledge and accept these duties beforehand, and that the Department as an employer cannot change this policy.

It seems that the Department very seldom calls for extended periods of travel time from full-time railway mail clerks. Usually, they make only one full round trip followed by an immediate return to the home terminal. If this is really the case, we agree.

Railway mail clerks in the United States have assignments similar in most details to those of their Canadian counterparts. We are told that these assignments also vary as to duration. Nevertheless, they are not paid any additional allowances or credits for being away from home. However, they are given a pass allowing them to return home on any train without charge, but without any consideration whatever being given to travel time.

WE RECOMMEND:

269. That the Department make sure railway mail clerks are provided at all times with the necessary means of transportation when they must travel from their place of residence to the starting point of the assigned run and back.
270. That expenses incurred by railway mail clerks in such cases be reimbursed.
271. That the Department, in consultation with the Federation of Railway Mail Clerks, revise its regulations concerning time compensation for clerks travelling under such circumstances.

PART VII

SOME SPECIAL PROBLEMS

CHAPTER 40

PUBLIC RELATIONS

The Department's public relations and information program accounts for approximately 0.2% of the Post Office Department's total budget. This is a very small percentage. As for the program itself, it has not always been as broad as it should have been. The Department admits this.

It was not until last year that it began the work of re-organization and expansion essential to the implementation of an entirely new public relations program. It is waiting for the Bureau of Classification Revision to complete its study of the Public Information Officer group.

The new program appears to be well planned. Its main aims are to improve the Department's public image, to better inform "mailers" and seek their co-operation. It is also directed to employees who, in their daily contacts with the public, can leave a good or bad impression of the postal service. We hope that the Department will receive the assistance it needs to carry out its program.

Some employees claim that the prestige of the Department is deteriorating in some areas. We are under the impression that it enjoys an excellent reputation in the country at large and that Canadians recognize the good quality of our postal service. We are convinced that a great majority of the employees themselves are more than willing to co-operate actively in all projects which are likely to improve the Department's image, if in fact, it is deteriorating.

WE RECOMMEND:

272. That the Department and appropriate agencies hasten the decisions required to implement the new public relations and information program of the Post Office Department.

CHAPTER 41

METHODS AND STANDARDS

Approximately 12 years ago the Department established a Methods and Standards Division which adopted a system of analysing the work flow in the field operating services of the Post Office Department and sought better methods of processing the mail.

The Department not only has the right but also an obligation to find ways of improving its methods of operation.

The Department, moreover, is satisfied with the results of this undertaking. Among other things, it has made it possible to realize considerable savings.^{1/} For the information of the employees, it emphasizes that they themselves have profited by it. For example, the Department gives credit to the Methods and Standards Division and its program for the reduction of week-end shifts and for making possible the granting of annual vacation leave in the summer to a greater number of employees.

And yet, no Division in the Department was the object of more criticism.

The staff organizations have been critical of the arbitrary way in which the system was adopted in the first place: no consultation, no discussion, no exchange of views, no explanation, they claim, ever preceded its implementation.

^{1/} According to information supplied by the Department, the total expenses incurred by the Methods and Standards Division in 1963-64 reached \$656,000, while the gross savings across the country amounted to \$5,400,000. The Department states that, in ten years, the net savings have reached \$20,666,000.

The employees are skeptical. They suspect the new techniques of being tools in the hands of management aimed at increasing production at any cost and decreasing personnel establishments. They charge that these are hindering them in their work and reducing their normal efficiency. They criticize the Division's officials for their superior attitude or for their lack of consideration for the workers.

(1) In the Department's opinion difficulties arose in the first place because the aims of the program had not been explained in enough detail to the workers but, the Department claims that when it became aware of this omission, it made every effort to explain and to clarify the methods and the aims of the Methods and Standards Division.

We do not feel it has succeeded to any significant degree. A great deal more remains to be done to create a favourable atmosphere and a climate of understanding and confidence. To achieve this:

- a) A more comprehensive dialogue must be held. The Department has indicated that it would readily agree to discuss details of the methods and standards adopted to date with the representatives of the staff organizations and would also agree to allow them to participate as observers in future projects.
- b) It is important that the personnel of the Methods and Standards Division who are now given a one-month training course in the basic techniques of time-and-motion study and then six more months on-the-job training, be better informed and better trained in the art of human relations. Their task would become more popularly accepted and most likely they would be more successful in gaining acceptance of their proposed changes if they sought the co-operation of the workers and encouraged suggestions and an exchange of views.
- c) Their success would be even greater if they took more precautions in order to minimize the impression that the sole purpose of Methods and Standards is

to place constant pressure on employees to increase their output. The purpose is to obtain from the work force 85% of what is considered a reasonable rate of production. It was alleged that the results are posted only when this percentage is not met. We believe the results should also be posted when the 85% mark is exceeded. We are convinced that the employees would react far more favourably to the demands of the Methods and Standards Division if, when the occasion arises, they were made to feel fully appreciated for their greater efforts and for the progress they make.

d) This Division could play a still more active and profitable role by finding ways and means to improve certain working conditions directly related to its objectives. We are thinking of measures taken in laying out work areas, to ensure better lighting or ventilation, and also of the adoption of more comfortable stools, improved sorting cases, standing boards for sorters, etc.

There are many things which affect the employees directly in their daily work. If the Methods and Standards Division can prove itself in small matters, it will probably be more successful in "selling" the more important procedures.

(2) An appreciable number of employees suggested that the Methods and Standards Division be abolished and replaced by supervision of a better quality. The Department believes that the need for changes and improvements in work methods will always exist and that the system these employees are complaining about is the best and most economical one to its knowledge.

Methods and standards are a "necessary evil". Employees do not understand the necessity for it as is so often the case in industry. This is the reason why the Department must make a sustained effort to familiarize employees with the aims and function of this Division.

WE RECOMMEND:

273. That, henceforth, before making any significant changes in methods and standards, the Department first discuss them with the staff organizations.
274. That all postal employees obtain detailed explanation of the objectives of the present Methods and Standards program and of the results achieved to date.
275. That the personnel of the Methods and Standards Division receive adequate training in the art of "human relations".
276. That the Methods and Standards Division pay more attention to the improvement of equipment and working conditions and to any other factor which may affect the workers in the carrying out of their daily tasks.

CHAPTER 42

PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION

We have already mentioned specifically and at times implicitly the need for a better personnel administration in the Department.

Some will say that this matter does not fall within the authority of an inquiry on working conditions and that we are overstepping our terms of reference.

We do not agree. We feel, on the contrary, that this vast area of responsibility must be analysed and discussed in our Report. It is closely related with the general welfare of the employees and the maintenance of high morale which affect their efficiency and productivity. It is, as a matter of fact, one of our main concerns.

(1) With the forthcoming collective bargaining and with the discussions which they will provoke and the grievance procedures they will bring into being, the working conditions of postal employees are bound to improve tremendously. As a complement to this giant stride in the right direction, we believe it is essential that the Department establish and maintain a sound program of personnel policies, practices and procedures, and create an organization capable of implementing this program in the field operating services.

To date, personnel administration has too often offered in field offices only personnel "services". It has played a rather passive role. Its representatives and officers in some grade 19, 18 and 17 post offices and in some districts have taken little initiative. They have waited for employees to come to them looking for

advice. They have undertaken, as we have already stated, incidental or secondary tasks to the detriment of their main functions.^{1/}

We have an entirely different concept of personnel administration.

We do not see this service as an usurper of the rights, powers or prerogatives of line managers, but we do see it as a service intended to assist, advise, counsel and co-operate with them in the carrying out of their responsibilities. This service must not be relegated to the background. It rests with "Personnel" to look for and suggest improvements, attempt to persuade managers of the value of new policies and, should the occasion arise, help implement them. At times, Personnel Administration will have to assert itself, as it were, and prove it is capable of resolving some of the difficult problems encountered.

We do not deny the importance of providing personnel "services", but, in our opinion, this is a secondary function for Personnel Administration and its administrators or officers. Its primary function is to identify obstacles and problems, examine them, study their functional, social or economic implications, and recommend logical and practical solutions. This service is justified and should be recognized as a separate entity. It must explore new horizons in this age of change and rapid evolution in which we live, and keep pressing for progress. The very size of the Post Office Department, its ever-growing operational requirements and its obligation to serve the public directly and promptly from day to day, demands a modern, dynamic and ever alert Personnel Administration.

It is time that all district directors, postmasters and department heads, officers and supervisors in the field, at the district and local level, understand the practical value of a sound personnel policy in a department such as the Post Office, which is more operational than administrative. To a large extent, it is

^{1/} Chapter 4, "General Impressions".

the more or less opposing attitude of some of these people which has prevented the implementation of advice received from the few personnel experts working at Headquarters.

We have noted that the Government now recognizes the importance of this problem: the Treasury Board has created a separate branch to provide policy guide lines, direction, and co-ordination of the personnel administration function throughout the Public Service; the Civil Service Commission is making every effort to improve the staffing of the Public Service and it has also employed outside consultants to study all aspects of this field in some departments.

WE RECOMMEND:

277. That the senior officer responsible for personnel administration in the Department be given the rank of Assistant Deputy Minister and report directly to the Deputy Postmaster General.
278. That Personnel Administration be reorganized and that a sufficient number of qualified persons be employed as soon as possible.
279. That this personnel service be provided with all necessary research facilities.

These are the first and most important steps to take.

We see this Assistant Deputy Minister as the equivalent of a vice-president in charge of personnel in a business corporation. In view of the extent the geographical area served by the Post Office and the significance of labour costs in the Department, he should have all necessary latitude to recommend the adoption of personnel policies which clearly take cognizance of the many and complex needs of the daily operation of the postal service and the general welfare of the employees.

(2) We examined, with great interest, a model of a departmental personnel administration organization, proposed by J.J. Carson, Chairman of the Civil

Service Commission,^{1/} grouping the functions into four main subdivisions:

- a) manpower planning and development;
- b) compensation and benefits;
- c) staff relations;
- d) personnel services.

In May 1966, at the request of the Deputy Postmaster General, the Civil Service Commission prepared and published "A Plan of Organization for Personnel Administration in the Post Office Department". This plan offers a basic structure "suitable for the requirements of the Department based on present requirements and anticipated developments in the field of personnel administration in the Canadian Civil Service generally". This plan follows the general outline of the Carson model and appears fully acceptable to us. We believe that both the Civil Service Commission and the Department are to be commended for their initiative and for adopting measures which were obviously necessary and are sure to enhance the lot of postal employees.

In the appendices of our Report the main position guides covering the most important functions,^{2/} together with charts showing the present and proposed organization for personnel administration,^{3/} and the geographic distribution of employees in the Post Office Department.^{4/}

Here is a brief outline of the proposed organization:

- a) Staffing
 - (i) Manpower planning
 - (ii) Manpower appraisal and inventory

^{1/} Paper prepared for the Public Personnel Institute, 15 June 1965.

^{2/} Appendices H to N.

^{3/} Appendices O and P.

^{4/} Appendix Q.

- (iii) Training and development
- (iv) Employment
- b) Personnel Classification
- c) Program Co-ordination and Employee Service
 - (i) Communications officer
 - (ii) Employee services
 - (iii) Headquarters personnel administration
- d) Staff Relations
 - (i) Co-ordination of grievances and adjudications
 - (ii) Compensation and conditions
 - (iii) Planning and research
- e) Field Offices
 - (i) Personnel administrators in major post offices, 1/
(Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Ottawa)
 - (ii) District personnel administrators (14).

These headings except perhaps that of the program co-ordinator appear self-explanatory.

In an organization which serves hundreds of localities, through staff and semi-staff post offices spread right across the country, with anywhere from three or four employees to several thousands each, there are bound to be difficulties of communication. Inevitably, a great many directives and instructions are required to guide such personnel. So, for at least some time to come, we believe that the Department should not pursue further its policy of decentralization of responsibilities and authority from the divisions and services at Headquarters. They would do well to mark time for a while until policies, programs and procedures have been developed and co-ordinated.

1/ We believe that a personnel officer should also be provided for grades 16, 15, and 14 post offices, as recommended by the Civil Service Commission.

The Assistant Deputy Minister (Personnel Administration) will have to devote considerable time and effort to this job. The advent of collective bargaining and the first discussions around the bargaining table will demand his personal attention. He will have to keep in constant contact with the field people to become aware and keep abreast of all the problems arising as a result of the acceptance of new policies and their interpretation. He will also have the responsibility to ensure they are accepted. He certainly cannot be tied down to his desk.

We considered recommending that he be given an assistant but decided against it and support the opinion of the Civil Service Commission that this arrangement "... combines the twin disadvantages of blocking direct access to the senior administrator by his principal subordinates, and additionally, relegates the Directors within the branch to a third level reporting relationship with the attendant implications of this arrangement for the classification levels of their positions".^{1/}

However, it is absolutely essential that a specialist be recognized as the chief of the Programme Co-ordination Division. Not only will he have to recruit or assign more than 70 competent personnel administrators or officers for the field operating services but he will also be responsible for guiding and advising them. These administrators will be "on the front line" daily, at the district or local level, facing the difficulties and problems as they arise. As the Civil Service Commission stated in its survey "...even the most enlightened policies and most wisely conceived programmes originating from headquarters will fall short of required standards of application unless field managers have prompt and effective access to advice and service, responsive on a day-to-day basis, to their requirements".^{2/}

^{1/} A Plan of Organization for Personnel Administration in the P.O. Dept., p. 73.

^{2/} Ibid., p. 72.

If the Department has such an organization for personnel administration, it will improve its employee relations appreciably, providing that postmasters and supervisors who are in daily contact with the employees are themselves equal to the task, and collaborate without any reservation towards the application of the newly proposed concepts.

WE RECOMMEND:

280. That the plan of organization proposed for personnel administration in the Post Office Department be implemented as soon as possible.
281. That grade 16, 15 and 14 post offices be provided with a personnel officer.
282. That the appropriate authorities allocate the funds required by the Department for this purpose.

CLOSING REMARKS

CLOSING REMARKS

Our mission is accomplished!

We feel confident that we have carried out this task to the best of our ability and with all the dispatch humanly possible. We have tried to be positive and practical. We made every effort to be constructive rather than destructive.

We hope that the Department, the staff organizations, the postal employees and all other interested agencies will welcome our Report as a whole and will implement our recommendations.

Whatever happens, we believe that all of our recommendations deserve serious and honest consideration. Some will consider perhaps that we have carried things too far, others, not far enough. Some will be surprised at the great number of recommendations which are favourable to the employees. One must not lose sight of the fact that our Commission had to express an opinion on grievances submitted by these employees and not on all departmental policies. Nevertheless, anyone who reads our Report carefully will note that we did not agree with many of the suggestions made by employees. In such instances, however, we did not think it was necessary to make any recommendations.

What matters, first of all, is to have every one of our recommendations studied and, either within or outside the context of the forthcoming collective bargaining negotiations, find solutions or ways and means by which postal employees will be given fair and reasonable working conditions, while at the same time keeping our country's postal service at its present high level of efficiency.

We are confident that the Department and the staff organizations will be able to attain this goal if the good will and sincerity, which we witnessed throughout our Inquiry, continues to prevail at all times.