

Retrogression in the Civil Service

(By P. Ambrose)

The Dominion Government civil service is seething with unrest and discontent. The long-promised re-classification has fallen short of expectation. It was generally understood that salaries, as a whole, were to be placed on a higher basis altogether. In some cases this may have happened; but for the most part the re-classification is a bitter disappointment. Even where it looked hopeful for an employee, the Civil Service Commission has so ingeniously manipulated it in regard to the individual concerned, that the latter is very little, if any better off. There are men in responsible positions, their working days filled to capacity, who have not received an advance in their salary for ten years. It has been stated that no increase has been given City Postmasters for over thirty years. However, these men are awaiting the findings of the re-classification committee in the hope that their salaries will be raised to a figure commensurate with their office and responsibilities, but the indications are that there is a keen disappointment in store for them.

The discontent in the Post Office is no secret. When the new cost of living bonus came into effect it superseded all previous bonuses including the provisional allowance which was given to Western employees. The Letter Carriers found to their dismay that, instead of receiving an increase, they were either kept at their present standing or reduced. No permanent Letter Carrier got any increase whatever. As for the clerical staff 66 2-3 per cent. were reduced, some of them to the amount of \$10 per month on a salary of \$1000 and \$1100 per year; 27 1/2 per cent. were maintained at their present salary and the remaining few who were all of the higher grade clerks received an increase. Temporary men were not granted a provisional allowance, hence many of them felt the benefit of \$10 per month advance, whilst others amongst them were reduced. Taken altogether the government, when it introduced the new cost of living bonus into the Vancouver Post Office, made a saving on salaries of hundreds of dollars per month at the expense of the men. The present year will bring a reduction to 80 per cent. of the entire staff; 80 per cent. of those who were on the permanent staff last year will be reduced \$5 per month; and every single man will suffer a reduction as high as \$24 per month.

Temporary men in all departments are no less disgruntled than others, for when they are placed upon the permanent staff they suffer a decrease of about \$15 per month, which is exceedingly galling to them.

To give a case in point. A certain man with a wife and four children to support volunteered for the war. He was examined and passed, and he proceeded to Montreal where he was again examined and then sent back to Vancouver. He immediately applied again, was examined and passed, but upon showing his papers he was told that certain letters written upon them in Montreal meant "set aside," and accordingly this was acted upon. Eventually, he obtained a temporary job in the Government employ at \$75 per month. He held this for three and a half years during which constant efforts were made to have him placed on the permanent staff. Ignoring the claims of the temporary man the Civil Service Commission declared the position vacant, and it was duly advertised at the minimum remuneration of \$60 per month, and bonus, if allowed by law. This man applied for it, filling in the necessary form. There were no other applicants although the time was extended twice in order to give the returned soldiers a chance to secure this "plum." Left without a choice the Civil Service Commission appointed the temporary man to the position. He now does the same work

that he has been doing for more than three years, and has exactly \$15 less to draw at the end of the month.

The discontent in Vancouver in all the departments of the service is typical of the dissatisfaction obtaining throughout the country; and at the present moment there are very strong rumours that there will be a Dominion wide strike amongst all classes of civil servants.

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