

Hints From New Zealand

Civil servants have a comparatively happy lot in New Zealand if one may judge from some of the things spoken of by Hon. R. B. Morris, secretary of the Post and Telegraphs Department of New Zealand, which is equivalent to the deputy post master general in Canada.

Political influence in civil service appointments is unknown in New Zealand, and the public employees also enjoy a generous superannuation scheme, appeal boards, an adequate bonus and an impartially worked merit system in promotion and appointments. Another innovation is an inspection board which goes about and reports on employees in the department. These reports are considered in promotion cases, and they are freely accessible to civil servants, so that if a report is unsatisfactory an individual may challenge it.

"We have the best little postal system in the world", said Mr. Morris smiling modestly. He is on his way to the International Postal Union conference which meets in Madrid, and he is going to look into the postal department of Canada and the United States to see if he can gain any pointers. So far he confesses he hasn't found much that can improve on the New Zealand post office business. He is impressed with the greatness of Canada, but is appalled at the cost of living over here, which he says is away in excess of New Zealand.

Superannuation

Mr. Morris said that in New Zealand the postal employees participated in a superannuation scheme and in reply to a question said that if postal employees were to strike they would be liable to forfeit the superannuation for "insubordination". But throughout the service increases had been made to meet the higher cost of living. Just before he left New Zealand a commission had been set up to establish a bonus to cover the cost of living increase. Statisticians had fixed 62 per cent. over the prewar cost of living rates as the basis for a new bonus award. The bonus will be increasable or reducible as circum-

stances warrant, although few expect prewar conditions again to prevail.

There is a pro rata contribution by all employees to the superannuation fund, but the bonus is left out of calculations in superannuation contributions. A civil servant in New Zealand may retire after forty years' service or at the age of 60. There is no compulsory retirement age, but it is understood that a man is due for superannuation at 65. The rate of superannuation is two-thirds of a man's salary calculated on what he has received during the last three years of service. Contributions are made according to service and salary. A man who enters the service when he is 21 pays 5 per cent. of his salary right through to his retiring age. A man who joins the service at 40 pays 9 per cent., and payments are graded between 5 and 9 per cent. If ill-health causes early retirement, his allowance is based on length of service.

Promotion Boards

Mr. Morris was asked how appointments were made in New Zealand. Right at the beginning he said that there were no political appointments in New Zealand, and seeking to obtain appointments through political influence is an indictable offence. In the post and telegraphs department there was a promotion board which made all appointments and promotions. This board consisted of the secretary (Mr. Morris), chief telegraph engineer, chief inspector and an officer nominated by the employees.

"This body", said Mr. Morris, "sits in judgment on each and every man's merits. Every Monday, vacancies in the department are advertised, and a week is allowed for applicants to send in their names. When these are received they are notified and then send in qualifications, experience, etc. All men's qualifications are carefully scrutinized, and every man is appointed or promoted on merit, and merit alone.

"When a decision is arrived at, it goes before what is known as the public service commission. If that

body does not agree on a recommendation it is referred to the minister."

Appeal Boards

New Zealand has appeal boards, too. "We have an appeal board", went on Mr. Morris, "and a very excellent thing it is. The chairman of the appeal board is a magistrate, and there are two other members — an officer selected by the department, and an officer elected by the employees. The decisions of this board are final. Every individual has an opportunity to bring an appeal or to defend himself, and he may engage legal counsel if so disposed."

Inspection Boards

Another innovation in New Zealand is an inspection board. This is composed of seven officers, Mr. Morris said, who go around in conjunction with the chief postmasters and make reports on the work and merits of each employee. That report is shown to an employee, and if it is not in his favor he is given a chance to explain, or he can challenge it if he so desires. There is no secret about the reports, and every man knows that merit will count.

H. C. L.

Mr. Morris said he was "appalled" at the cost of living in Canada compared with New Zealand. He compared hotel prices to the disadvantage of Canada. In New Zealand no one is allowed to sell butter at more than 40 cents a pound or bread at 10 cents a loaf, and for \$6.00 a day one can stay in the best hotel with room, bath and four meals a day, with afternoon tea thrown in.

Speaking of the International Postal Union conference in Madrid, Mr. Morris declared that the conference was not held in 1914 when last it was called owing to the outbreak of war. It would have many matters of international importance to deal with, including international postal arrangements, and especially air mail services which would be seriously discussed for the first time.