

His
Majesty's
Mails

POSTAL JOURNAL

Postal
Clerks'
Forum

Classification dated back

An order-in-council has just been issued to the effect "that the Government do undertake to submit such legislation and to ask for such appropriations at the next Session of Parliament as will provide for the application of said classification schedules to the Civil Service generally as of the 1st April, 1919." The effect of this will be that all salary increases provided in the recent legislation will take effect from the first of last April.

This announcement, coming almost on the Eve of Christmas, has caused the greatest satisfaction among civil servants throughout the Dominion and without detracting in any way from the credit due to the officers of other organizations who supported the postal clerks in their endeavors to bring this about, it is regarded by the rest of the Service as a Christmas Gift from the Dominion Postal Clerks' Association.

The executive of this Association never lost an opportunity to urge upon the Government the desirability of fulfilling the pledges given on its behalf, by its responsible ministers and incorporated in Section 11 of Bill 136. For some reason which civil servants are unable to understand, even up to the present, the minister in charge of this legislation, when reintroducing it under the title of Bill 18, saw fit to change the date of the coming into effect of its monetary provisions from 1919 to 1920. This provoked a storm of indignation and was led by the President of the Postal Clerks' Association who protested bitterly to the Parliamentary Committee of the House of Commons in making representations before that body on October 6. This protest was repeated in a memorandum sent to every member of the Committee the following day.

The argument was most convincing, but the Committee which was presided over by the Hon. A. K. Maclean, was apparently not impressed with the necessity of taking any action and the bill passed the house without the offensive section being amended.

When the bill came up in the Senate it was referred to a committee of the house and Mr. Cantwell made another attempt to get it amended by submitting a memorandum to this committee from which the following is quoted:—

"I desire to direct your attention to the last Section of Bill 18 (Section 13) which makes the proposed salary schedules effective as from April 1, 1920, instead of April 1, 1919, as provided for in Section 11 of Bill 136, which was only given one reading at the last Session of Parliament.

"I am convinced that when this change was made by the Hon. Mr. Maclean he did not realize that it involved a breach of faith on the part of the Government with this organization, and incidentally with every civil servant in the Dominion. The extent to which the Government is pledged to date the new salary schedules back to April 1, 1919 may be judged from the following:—

"Replying to a question asked by Mr. Sheard on May 12 last, the Hon. Mr. Maclean is reported in Hansard as having made the following statement:—

"When the classification, with the schedules of salaries, is approved by Parliament, it will relate back to the beginning of the fiscal year; and if it happens that any members of the Service are entitled, under that classification, to promotion in rank or in salary, the same will date back to the first of April last, and in that way *no substantial wrong can be done to the personnel of the civil service in the monetary sense* by reason of an unexpected delay of a few weeks in the completion of the work."

"Previous to this the Hon. Mr. Rowell gave a verbal promise to the same effect to a delegation from this association which he subsequently repeated in a letter to the writer, dated April 10, and read in the House of Commons on April 14 (see Hansard of that date, page 1496). In this letter the Hon. Mr. Rowell's promise was reiterated in the following terms:—

"The new classification, when put into effect, will apply to the current fiscal year, commencing the 1st of April, 1919."

On May 13, in reply to a question asked by Major Andrews (Winnipeg Centre) the Hon. Mr. Rowell is reported as giving the following answer:—

"Am advised by the Civil Service Commission that printing which has already commenced will take substantially longer than originally estimated, and this is one explanation of delay. *But as everything relates back to the first of April, post office employees cannot be prejudiced in any way by unavoidable though regrettable delay, and precipitate action on their part would be wholly unjustified.*"

"I think, Sir, your committee will agree with me that not only is the Government pledged to date the schedules back to April 1, 1919, but Parliament also would seem to have pledged itself by its silent acquiescence when these pledges were given on the floor of the House.

"May I now request your committee to consider the reasons advanced by the minister in charge of the bill, for changing this date. On the 10th instant, when the bill was being discussed in committee of the whole, Mr. A. E. Fripp, called the attention of the House to the pledges given by Hon. Mr. Rowell, referred to above. The Hon. Mr. Maclean, replying to Mr. Fripp, (see Hansard, October 10, page 1030) made the following statement:—

....."the Government felt that, with the classification in effect, it would be enabled to adjust the bonus on a more proper and scientific basis, because there would be a readjustment of the salaries of all those in the Service. However the Bill did not pass, and Classification was not adopted. *In view of this fact the Government were obliged to establish a bonus for the Service covering the whole fiscal year from April 1, 1919 to March 31, 1920.*

"The minister, in these words, gave Parliament the impression that the reason the Government established the bonus provided by Order-in-council of July 15, 1919, (P. C. 1485) was to give a measure of relief to civil servants, pending the adoption of the new salary schedules provided for in the classification. There is no doubt whatever about this, as Mr. Maclean goes on to say:—

"The effect of the classification will be to give very formidable increases to some members of the Civil Service. In the meanwhile they—the Service—have got a very substantial bonus, and *I am not quite satisfied myself that they are entitled to both.....*"

"Had the Honorable Gentleman read the 'Foreword' in the reprint of the salary schedules, now being considered by your committee, I do not think he would have made that statement, as the last paragraph of the foreword (page four) reads as follows:—

"The rates of compensation for the several classes, except those where it is provided that prevailing rates shall apply, are based on