

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

this problem cares to write a letter to me I will undertake to see that the letter is brought before the Board of Transport Commissioners and considered fully and carefully. I do not think it is necessary to write to me, but some might feel that if this were done the letter might get more attention than if it were written direct to the board. If letters are written direct to the board I am confident they will get the same attention.

It might be pointed out that there has been a steady increase from year to year in the number of motor accidents in this country in which human beings are killed. But as far as rail crossings are concerned there has been a steady diminution in the number of persons killed in the last 10 or 12 years. I believe there were more in 1965 than in 1964; but in every other year the numbers killed and seriously injured have declined, both relatively and absolutely.

While manifestly, we are not doing everything that could be done, I think a better job is being done in preventing motor accidents at rail crossings than is being done in preventing motor accidents generally. This is some encouragement. We have spent large sums of money in this direction—about \$15 million a year; and this, over 10 years, amounts to \$150 million.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rinfret): I regret to interrupt the minister but the time allotted to him has expired.

PUBLIC SERVICE—REPRESENTATIONS RESPECTING RELIEF FOR RED CIRCLED EMPLOYEES

Hon. R. A. Bell (Carleton): The answer given by the president of the Treasury Board (Mr. Benson) to my question about red circling appearing at page 8512 of *Hansard* is so unsatisfactory and so unrealistic as to lead one to the irresistible conclusion that the cabinet, Treasury Board and the Civil Service Commission are totally out of touch with conditions existing throughout the public service. Never in my experience has resentment been so dangerous and so threatening.

Throughout the public service there is seething discontent, deep-seated anger and bitterness, with the most serious immediate and potential consequences to morale.

The president of Treasury Board in his answer last Tuesday promised a review of red circling as of December 31 of this year. That is not good enough. The time for review is now—forthwith. A total change of policy

must be made at once if irreparable harm to the public service is to be avoided.

Red circling is the result of the classification review undertaken as a preliminary to the implementation of collective bargaining. The objective was the simplification of the structure of the service and a very great reduction in the number of grades and categories. Those whose existing position carries a higher category at present than under the new classification have been red-circled and thereby deprived of increases in salary. In some departments almost all employees in certain branches have been deprived of the increases they had the right reasonably to expect.

• (10:20 p.m.)

Sir, I laugh when I think that six months ago I had never heard of the expression red-circling. During the past three or four months more than two thirds of my working hours have been taken up by bitter and angry civil servants, resentful of their red-circling, and quite frankly it has become so bad that I sometimes think I never talk to anyone who is not angry.

I want to make quite clear that these civil servants are not in any way to blame for their plight. Their existing classifications were determined by the Civil Service Commission and Treasury Board, and it is these very bodies who now gaily say, "Oh yes, we were wrong when we established that category or grade for the job, but we will rectify our mistake now regardless of the detriment to you."

How the Civil Service Commission could have been so dead wrong in so many thousands of cases in past years, and now be so satisfied it is right at this time, I am at a loss to understand. But the fact is that either the Civil Service Commission has been dead wrong in an atrocious number of cases over the years or it is dead wrong now, and my opinion is that it is dead wrong now.

I reiterate that the individual civil servant, not in any way himself to blame, is being penalized for the mistake or default of the Civil Service Commission at an earlier time. Can anyone blame him for being bitter? Can anyone blame him if morale is at low water mark?

But the commission has now compounded its own errors. Allegedly to help red-circled civil servants, it has created in the various departments pools of red-circled civil servants who have priority in promotions. What