

Mr. HUGHES. Are the railway mail clerks, under the new system, transferred from, say an Ottawa or Quebec division, up to an Ontario division?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. Whilst I would feel bound to have regard to the convenience of those in the service, and perhaps would be bound to respect provincial lines, I think there is much inconvenience in the mail service through having to regard the division of provinces, such as Ontario, where the province is divided up into different railway mail service districts. I would desire the railway mail clerks to understand that there is but one service from ocean to ocean, and that they are not to consider themselves unfairly treated if their runs are changed in the public interest.

Mr. HUGHES. In making any such change, is the hon. gentleman careful to look after seniority. For instance, a clerk in Barrie or Toronto division should not lose his seniority because a mail clerk is brought in from another division to fill a vacancy. For instance, if a vacancy occurred in the first-class, it would not be fair that a second-class officer should lose his seniority by some one being brought from another position to fill the first-class vacancy.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I should not like to make a statement that would be binding upon me in any way. I do not know that mail clerks who are attached to a division have any special rights with regard to that division. They should rather be regarded, I think, as members of one common service. There are certain prizes under this arrangement for the service, which, I believe, will stimulate the members of the staff to efficiency. The railway mail service is regarded as one of the most severe in connection with the Post Office Department. It is a service very trying to the physical endurance of the staff, and after a man has served a number of years in it, it is reasonable that he should look forward to being able to retire into a less severe branch. For that reason, I think that whoever may be in this department should feel perfectly free to reward merit and promote men regardless of the accident of their having been appointed to another division.

Mr. HUGHES. Here is a division, say the Toronto division, with a certain number of second-class clerks, and among these a vacancy occurs. There is a third-class clerk ready and available, and who merits promotion, but a second-class clerk is brought from Ottawa to fill the vacancy in the Toronto division. Would the third-class clerk in Toronto then lose his seniority and chance of promotion, which a third-class clerk in Ottawa might gain?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. It would be my duty to try and respect the rights of the clerks in these divisions, but my own

inclination would be, if there were no restriction of the kind alluded to, to treat all the railway mail clerks as members of the common service, and in matters of promotion I would take the advice of those capable of giving it and make them without regard to districts.

Mr. McINERNEY. Has the hon. Postmaster General had any protest from the mail clerks of New Brunswick concerning a change in the run made there lately?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I have had no protest, although some representations have been made to me. I do not think there is any real foundation for any grievance. The change the hon. gentleman refers to arises in respect of the run between Lévis and Moncton. It happened that at one time that was a dividing line, Campbellton being the dividing point, I think about 290 miles from Lévis to Campbellton, and a little less from Campbellton to Moncton. I think I am correct in saying that there were twelve railway mail clerks engaged in that service. By making it one through run, doing away with those divisions, and making the run direct from Lévis to Moncton, we are able to conduct that service with four less men, when they are properly educated to it. When they are properly accustomed to it, it would be more profitable to the clerks and better for the service. Every time there is a change in connection with the railway there is a loss of energy, a waste of time, a waste of labour. By the arrangement that we are experimenting with and that I believe will be successful in a month, we shall have four mail clerks starting from Quebec and four from Moncton, four New Brunswickers, and four Quebecers. I think that my hon. friend (Mr. McInerney), perhaps, is under the erroneous impression that inasmuch as in the organization there happened to be a little preponderance from Quebec that is a permanency. If that is his fear, I will assure my hon. friend that there is no foundation for it. We are only putting it in shape.

Mr. McINERNEY. I only wish to bring this matter to the Postmaster General's attention, because when I was down in New Brunswick at Easter I met several of the railway mail clerks and it was evident that they felt very sore indeed—I will not mention names—on account of the change then in operation. There were men who had been on the list for a long time, men appointed in 1873, in 1874, and they thought that the privileges they had enjoyed for so many years in the long run—which I understand is of advantage to a mail clerk because he is paid something for mileage—would be taken away from them by the system the Postmaster General was trying to bring into vogue. They made certain representations to me and said they intended to call the Postmaster General's attention to the facts. I understood that the whole