

fact that they are not paid a sufficient wage has had a considerably wider effect than many people in the east may suppose. There are now about 12,000 trackmen employed on all the railways, exclusive of the government road, and I believe that the wages of these men have been kept down during the past few years just because of the low price paid by the government. Other railway companies have pointed to the fact that the people's own employees were getting even less than these companies were paying. This argument was specially used in their strike last year. At present the question of wages on the Canadian Pacific Railway, affecting 6,000 or 8,000 men, is a matter for arbitration, and I believe that if the Minister of Railways would act on this resolution at once and grant the increase asked for, that would have an immediate effect on all other railway companies. I would rather this resolution were drawn in broader terms, because I notice there is a Bill before the House affecting the wages in the Post Office Department. Should that Bill become law the lowest rate paid in that department would be \$1.25 per day, and I am totally opposed to this government admitting at all that any man, who is required to give his whole time to the government service, should receive as low as \$1.25 per day, because under that rate no man is in a position to support a family.

Mr. H. R. EMMERSON (Westmoreland). I would like to ask the attention of the House for a few moments while I make reference to the position of the railway freight checkers and freight handlers. I fully endorse what has been said with respect to the sectionmen on the track of our government railways, but the freight handlers and freight checkers are obliged to work usually from thirteen to fifteen hours per day, and receive only \$1.20, though their work is of a nature that requires some considerable education. I believe that there is a condition inserted in government contracts for public works, which requires the contractor not to pay a less wage than \$1.25 per day, and it seems very inconsistent that this government, which insists on such a condition, should pay its own labourers only \$1.20 per day.

Mr. TAYLOR. In these growing times ?

Mr. EMMERSON. Yes, in these progressive, prosperous days. I am sure that the Railway Department is entitled to great credit for what it has already done in this direction. Only a few years ago, previous to 1896, 90 cents and 99 cents per day were paid. The Minister of Railways increased their wages gradually, until now they have reached \$1.20, and certainly the time has come when we should pay them a larger per diem allowance. In the railway department at Moncton, there have

Mr. PUTTEE.

been a great many increases within the last few years. In the railway offices the wages of the clerks have been very properly increased. They were formerly living upon the most meagre allowance, starvation salaries, but gradually these have been increased. In the workshops at Moncton a system had grown up which worked great inequality in wages paid the mechanics. It was suggested that a commission should be appointed to classify the work, and that a certain wage should be fixed for each particular class of work. It seems to me that that would have been a proper course to pursue, but the Minister of Railways took a different course and instructed his officials to make schedules. Under the old system three or four men would be working at the same bench, each of whom would require the same skill and qualifications. One man, probably, would be getting 15 cents an hour, another 19 cents, another 22 cents—all the result of accident. This was the outcome of the so-called system which has prevailed upon the Intercolonial Railway since it was a railway. The man who was receiving a relatively high wage received it simply because he happened to be more fortunate than his neighbour. Perhaps he had a little more influence, and had been able to secure attention to his claim, while his neighbour had not been so fortunate. There has been a readjustment, and these inequalities have been measurably removed. The men who are working at the same class of work get now the same wage—at least, to a degree that condition exists. It seems to me that a more perfect system could have been inaugurated by a more perfect classification of the work, and scheduling it as to the wages paid, so that there would be no possibility of any political or other influence being exercised in favour of this man or that man, but every one employed on the road would be classified, and would receive the wage belonging to his classification. I heartily endorse what has been stated by the mover and seconder of this resolution, and would urge that this matter should receive the urgent and prompt attention of the Minister of Railways.

Mr. DONALD A. MACKINNON (East Queen's). I have listened carefully to the speeches made by those who support this resolution, but I must say that I do not agree with them. It seems to me that a matter like this should be left with the Minister of Railways and his department. The work of the Intercolonial may sometimes call for the services of some labouring men who are not worth \$1.50 a day.

Mr. LOGAN. Then, they should not be there.

Mr. MACKINNON. They may be required for purposes which should not be paid for at that rate. It depends on the labour, and