

service is that it is one continuous service, and that the local inspectors should not interfere with it. The new system will result in a very considerable saving in the number of mail clerks in due time.

Mr. FOSTER. How ?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I think the men will work with greater efficiency and with more economy to the service. Not being under local management, their time will be utilized to the full without regard to districts. I could, if it were worth while, illustrate in detail some of the inconveniences arising from the old system. Suffice to say that in the United States the system obtains the whole mail service over that vast area being under one controlling mind, one central officer, with his officials scattered here and there, and all responding to his authority direct or through his local agents. Under the old system, the inspectors, having the railway mail clerks in their charge, have become rather local and stationary officers than what they were originally designed to be, as the term implies, inspectors, so that we have little staffs scattered throughout the country, doing local office work, instead of being engaged in what I think was the original design—inspecting local post offices and seeing that the stage work and the local mail service was being properly discharged. The new arrangement will, I think, result not only in a considerable reduction in the cost of the railway mail service, but in greater efficiency in what is commonly known as the land service. The inspectors will then be freer to attend to the work of their districts, and fewer men will be required for the working of those districts. I am satisfied that there will be generally increased efficiency with a reduction in cost.

Mr. BENNETT. In each of the six postal divisions in the province of Ontario, there were a certain number of railway mail clerks who were under the inspector of the division, and the inspector of each division had what was known as a chief railway mail clerk, to whom was assigned the duty of looking after the clerks on the trains. I understood the Minister to state that Mr. Armstrong, from the Toronto post office, who I believe is a most capable officer, has been appointed to the position of controller of the railway mail service. I wish to ask the Minister if it is the intention to have under Mr. Armstrong a chief railway mail clerk in each division, as heretofore. If these chief clerks are to be dispensed with, it must of necessity be the duty of Mr. Armstrong, in the event of a letter being lost or tampered with on a train, to go from one part of the province or of the Dominion to another to look after the matter.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. It will not be necessary to have as many chief

Mr. MULOCK.

railway mail clerks in the Ontario division as there have been. The system went into force on the 1st of April. I am feeling my way into it, but up to the present time it has worked satisfactorily, and I think, when a year goes by, if I am then here, it will be my pleasure to report satisfactory results such as I have indicated.

Mr. BENNETT. Will the hon. Minister be good enough to state what changes have been made with regard to the chief clerks ?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I cannot give all the details. No new persons have been taken into the service, the men being transferred from the railway mail service or from the inspectors' offices. There has been one chief clerk appointed for Halifax, one for St. John, one for Montreal, one for Quebec, one for Ottawa, one for Toronto, one for London, one for Winnipeg, and one for Victoria and the mainland in British Columbia. The last-named officer is temporarily looking after the service on the mainland, and is also, in consequence of the rapid increase of population, doing some work that properly belongs to the inspector's office.

Mr. HUGHES. Will the hon. Minister say what has been done with the railway mail clerks at Kingston, Stratford and Barrie ?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I cannot tell what has become of them at present. I presume they will be discharging the ordinary duties of mail clerks. My desire is to make promotions in the mail service the reward of merit, and I instructed the chief inspector and controller in each case to select the most efficient men in the district as local superintendents. I cannot give the names of them all now. These appointments that have been made as local superintendents, as connecting links between the controller and the railway mail staff, are, for the time being, temporary, to see whether they are equal to the task. If, after reasonable trial, they are found equal, their appointments will be made permanent. I have given a free hand to those officers to recommend—and have, in each case, acted on their recommendation—the men they consider the fittest, without regard to any other consideration. The system is being put into effect. If it happens that there are any in the service who occupy the position the hon. member for Victoria inquired about and who have not been drafted into higher positions, I will endeavour to find proper positions for them in the service.

Mr. HUGHES. Do the six old divisions for ordinary inspection purposes stand as they formerly did in Ontario ?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. Up to the present I have arrived at no final conclusion, but I believe this system will result in a very considerable economy in those inspectors and will warrant a reduction in the number.