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Fortnightly ONE PENNY

H.M. Customs and Excise. Waterguard Federation.

Conference, held at the Three Nuns Hotel,
Aldgate, London, on the 3rd and 4th May, 1917.

Continued.

4th May.

Conference resumed at 9-30 a.m., all the delegates being present with the exception of Mr. E. P. Madden, who was absent on Home Office business.

The minutes of the previous day's Conference were adopted. Mr. Hall proposed that copies of the more important resolutions adopted at the Conference should be transmitted to the Board. Mr. Sobey seconded, and it was carried.

Consideration of the Secretary's report was resumed. Mr. Howell moved the adoption of paragraphs dealing with the Special Allowance question. The projected claim for the extension of the Special Allowance granted to certain Preventive Men to all members of the grade, and the grant of an allowance on similar lines to the Preventive Officers had been unavoidably held up pending the settlement of the Civil Service Federation war bonus claim. Mr. Sobey seconded. Mr. Cox wished to know what action was intended to be taken on the salary question, and said the question of the Special Allowance was bound up with that of the salary claim. If the Joint Council intended taking immediate action with reference to the salary claim it appeared to him to be inadvisable to proceed with the claim under consideration. Mr. Howell suggested that the paragraph should be adopted, but that the question as to what action should be taken should be deferred until later in the day. This course was agreed to. This completed the consideration of the report.

Mr. Hall moved a resolution sent in from the Liverpool Branch of the Waterguard Federation—"That this meeting of the Liverpool Branch of the Waterguard Federation recommends the Joint Council to consider the desirability of creating a permanent Benevolent Fund to assist members who may be temporarily financially embarrassed through sickness, accident, or other such cause, and with that object to prepare a scheme to be placed before the members for consideration." He said this resolution had been discussed and passed at Liverpool with some enthusiasm. The occasion of its adoption was the experience gained in recent cases of appeals for assistance in necessitous circumstances. The passing round of the hat was objectionable, and did not always result in an equitable distribution of benevolence. There had been cases where subscriptions had not been equal to the need of the individual, and, on the other hand, there had been instances of over-subscription.

Both of these contingencies, and the undesirable method of appeal, could be prevented if benevolence in the Waterguard was systematised. Mr. Howell seconded, and supported Mr. Hall's statements. He felt strongly that the time had arrived for the institution of some such fund as this. Attempts to alter the rules of existing Societies had failed.

Mr. Cox agreed with the previous speaker as to the great difficulty of changing the rules of existing organisations. The Customs and Excise Orphanage was doing splendid work, and ought to be thoroughly supported by waterguard officers. But he realised now that some organisation was necessary in the Waterguard, and suggested the appointment of a small Committee to go into the matter. Mr. Sullivan said the establishment of a fund would be a big undertaking. He referred to the fine work of the Customs and Excise Orphanage, and appealed for stronger support of the fund, and also spoke of the Civil Service Benevolent Fund. Mr. Fell said that members in his district were satisfied that no Society existed to meet the needs of the Waterguard, and were strongly in favour of the proposal put forward. After very considerable discussion the resolution was adopted, with the addition—"That a small Committee be elected by the Federal Committee of the London Branch, with the President of the Joint Council as ex-officio member, to consider the question and report."

Mr. Howell moved—"That each officer should receive a confidential copy of the Ages and Capacities Report as affects himself, and, if such report is adverse that he be given an opportunity of defending himself before the report goes to the Board, and that an officer against whom a charge is made shall be entitled to claim the assistance of his Association at the Inquiry." He said the subject of this resolution was the cause of considerable concern, and even unrest in the Service to-day. The system of secret character reporting had always been objected to, and the serious position had been aggravated by the undoubted severity of disciplinary action during the past three or four years. There exists no adequate reason why a man should not know periodically what character had been given to him. If that character were an unjust one, and no one could deny that unfair and wrong judgments had been recorded against officers, the individual concerned should be able to demand an inquiry, and to have his character assessment varied if necessary. That, he thought, was a matter of elementary justice. The latter part of the resolution was designed to cover both the character assessment inquiry, and inquiries into specific offences. Here, again, the principle involved was one of elementary justice. The law of this country was at great pains to secure that offenders against the law should have the benefit of the best legal advice and defence. If he was unable to pay for it, then the State bore the cost. The same privilege should apply to inquires under the C.C. Act. An officer

should have the right to consult and obtain the assistance of his Association, which assistance would involve, if necessary, the employment of legal aid. He thought it some such scheme as this was eminently necessary. It was practically on all fours with the policy adopted by the Civil Service Federation. Mr. Tizard seconded. Mr. Sullivan said the matter was of great importance, and there was no doubt that a serious situation had arisen that should be remedied. No one defended or wished to defend drunkenness, slackness, or anything of that nature. Delinquencies should be punished, but justice must be done, punishment should be reasonable, and not harsh, otherwise it tended to create a bad atmosphere in the Service. After further discussion, during which specific cases of disciplinary action were fully discussed, the resolution was adopted. The following resolution was also passed—"That the Joint Council views with alarm recent cases of disciplinary action, the severity of the punishment inflicted in several instances, and instructs the Executive Committee to take action in the matter."

The resolution remitted from the Preventive Officers' Association Conference relative to the shipment of Bonded Stores at Glasgow and London was accepted, and action ordered to be taken thereon.

The resolution remitted from the Preventive Men's Association Conference relative to Examination for Preventive Officership was adopted, and referred to the Executive Committee for further consideration and necessary action, as also was the claim for the alteration of title to "Assistant Preventive Officer."

To be continued.

A Gallant Rescue.

A brave action was witnessed at Liverpool on the 12th inst., and the life of a soldier was saved through the efforts of a Waterguard officer.

At about 3 p.m. the launch "Princess Maud" was approaching a large hospital ship lying in the river when cries were heard, and it was seen that a soldier was in the water. A life-buoy was thrown from the launch but the man failed to reach it. Seeing this, Mr. Percy E. Hill dived in, fully dressed, and succeeded in keeping the man afloat until they both were picked up by a baggage ferry-boat which, evidently not seeing them, had added to their peril by nearly running them down. Another soldier who had dived in after his comrade was rescued by the launch.

Mr. Hill was heartily congratulated by his brother officers when the news became known, and he was able to proceed home 'all well.' The soldier, who was apparently suffering from shell shock, was taken to the Receiving House and attended to there.

Exciting episode at Liverpool.

A timely rescue from drowning was effected

recently at Liverpool, adding another to the long list of gallant actions performed by Waterguard officers.

At 11-30 p.m. on 25th ult., Mr. W. H. Parry, who was on patrol duty, when attending to the launch's rope at the Landing Stage, was precipitated into the river through attempting to step, as he thought, on to the 'rubber' which, however, had been removed for repairs. Acting with coolness and promptitude Mr. J. C. Burkey, Preventive Officer, caught hold of Mr. Parry's hair when that officer was located. Had it not been for the great assistance rendered by Mr. A. E. Burke, who used his electric torch, it is possible that the consequences would have been disastrous, the night being very dark.

We are glad to announce that Mr. Parry is suffering no ill effects from his ill-timed immersion.

Answers to Correspondents.

A.B.—We did not receive a report of Southampton meeting, therefore could not publish it.

H.C.S.—Why will you persist in sending your letters to the Editor? The Secretary deals with all business connected with the Journal.

A Queer Sea Yarn.

A remarkable story was told at the Liverpool Police Court on the 5th inst., when two Germans and a Dane were charged with offences against the Aliens Registration Order.

The Germans were sailors from a German vessel interned at Talcahuano, and the Dane was chief mate of a Chilean ship, in which the Germans shipped as a Swede and a Russian Finn respectively. The Germans knew the ship was bound for Liverpool, but they expected to be taken aboard a submarine, and promised the mate they would see that the ship was not sunk if they got away. The Dane promised to assist them, and gave his address for them to communicate with him when they got to Germany. In the Court he stated that as a neutral he did not think it his duty to 'give the men away.' The Germans said they were anxious to join the colours.

The mate was fined £150 or six months, and the other prisoners were each sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

The Aliens Officer was Mr. E. T. Davies, and he was assisted by Mr. F. Christiansen, Interpreter.