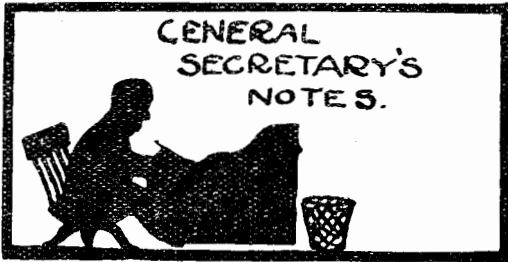


The Customs Journal.

No. 560.

April 10th, 1926.

Fortnightly.



Communications relative to this column should be addressed to Mr. J. Merron, 167, Clive Road, West Dulwich, London, S.E.21.

Considering that Waterguard members regard themselves as victims of the economy wave that has caused a decided tendency to depress wage scales generally, it will not be out of place to say a few words on the subject that seems to occupy the minds of many people at the moment.

I refer to the great amount of talk that has taken place lately regarding high wages in the U.S.A., and the cause of their being so high. The talk has been much, but of real discussion there has been very, very little indeed—and no wonder.

The striking contrast between prosperous America, with her admittedly well-paid working classes, and struggling England, with an impoverished wage-earning population, needs a little more explanation than the advocates of low wages would care to give. It is remarkably unfortunate for this latter school that we have before us at one and the same time the report from America, the report of the Committee on wages and hours in this country, and also the report of the Coal Commission.

All the reliable evidence goes to show that it is extremely doubtful if wages in England have, since 1914, been actually increased at all. In any case, whatever increase can be claimed is negligible. This of itself is sufficient to explode the theory that high wages are responsible for the nation's trade being at a low ebb.

The blame for the present condition of industry must be placed elsewhere, and it is only reasonable to assume that, since wages are not the cause, a substantial portion of blame must attach to the people responsible for undertakings in big business. That is why the recent revelations on the wages question find these people somewhat silent, and avoiding any controversy that would likely bring illuminating facts too clearly before the man in the street. To blame the working classes for the country's

misfortunes has been a very comfortable attitude to adopt. Dividends have, somehow or other, managed to roll in, and big employers have found life easy enough to allow of indulgence in the modern craze for gaiety and pleasure. This has left no time to discover any other reason for declining trade than that workers get some remuneration for the work they perform.

Apart from the fact that low wages have been proved over and over again to be sheer folly, the blaming of the workers is the crudest piece of reasoning that could possibly be used in connection with so important a matter as British trade. It indicates a foolishly superficial examination of the greatest problem the nation has ever had to tackle.

A feeble attempt has been made to explain away the high wages of the American worker, and it has been said that he produces more and works harder. The real fact, however, is that the American business man works harder than his English prototype, and he thus enables the wage-earner to produce more by providing proper conditions and facilities. He has no time for prejudice against the people he employs. His sole concern is that they, as an essential part of his business, should function properly. He realises that to achieve this result his employees, being human, must not be handicapped by privation and poverty.

It is of course possible that the business man of America is unconscious of reasoning things out this way, and it is probable that a thorough business training produces the instinct which is mainly responsible for the happy conditions that prevail. But whatever angle the matter is viewed from we cannot get beyond the fact that the American system produces a contented working population together with successful business enterprise.

Contrast this with the present condition of the English coal industry. One cannot but wonder what will be the verdict of future generations on our handling of this great problem. If ever there was a case where big employers showed pitiful incompetence, this is one. It would not be so deplorable if this supposedly enlightened section of the community had not so bitterly condemned the unfortunate individuals who have to get the coal under the worst mining conditions of any country.

The miner was condemned for resisting reductions in wages, and for refusing to work longer hours. He suffered untold abuse for his attitude. Yet the Royal Commission came to the conclusion that he was right in his opposition. Obviously, careful inquiry goes to prove that long hours and small wages are detrimental to the best interests of the mining industry—but the big

business element were not aware of this important fact, and they still find it a difficult pill to swallow.

The attitude between employer and employed in the coal industry is typical of almost every big business undertaking in the country, and it is high time we got rid of it. Until it is got rid of we will remain under the hypnotic spell of that awful word "economy"—the watch-word for timidity and incompetence.

* * *

It is very gratifying to see such great interest being taken in the question of promotion by merit. Unfortunately, however, there is evidence of a good deal of uninformed opinion in this connection. Some of the discussion in the correspondence columns of the "Journal" has been very wide of the mark, and therefore I propose to outline the situation, as it stands at present, in order to re-assure those members who are not quite clear on the subject.

One of the first things to be understood clearly is that the Executive Committee is, in every sense of the word, under full control by the Council in all matters of Association policy. Promotion by merit, or any other scheme, must necessarily be submitted to the Council before final adoption. This is a simple statement of fact, and it is to be hoped that any publicly expressed doubts regarding the point will be accompanied by the facts giving rise to them. The Executive, by this means, would be forced into the position of having to explain, or of maintaining a guilty silence. Incidentally, I might mention that the Executive would welcome the opportunity of defending its actions. In any case, the results would enable the average intelligent member to give a reasonably accurate judgment as to whether things were satisfactory or not.

This is a far better plan than to cast loose upon the winds a number of unpleasant references to alleged misdeeds by the Executive. Neither the members nor the Executive benefit from that sort of thing, and the only effect is to undermine the efficiency of the Association.

It will not be difficult for any fair-minded individual to choose as to which course is the more sportsmanlike.

The origin of the promotion by merit scheme was the general dissatisfaction with the existing method of calling A.P.O.'s for promotion. This dissatisfaction was strongly expressed at the last Council meeting, and, arising from the discussion, the Executive were instructed to go into the matter and to draw up an alternative scheme to be presented to the Council for consideration. This, of course, is the usual practice in such cases.

The Executive could not very well carry out these instructions effectively without gathering opinion from the Districts. It has been found by experience that the best method of doing this is to formulate a scheme for circulation to the Branches as a basis for discussion. Accordingly the promotion by merit scheme made its

appearance, after due consideration by the Executive. Obviously, such a scheme could not be perfect—and it was never claimed to be the ideal scheme. But surely that is no reason for attacking the Executive, either collectively or individually. The scheme has been handed to the Districts for the members to deal with it as they think fit. This fact seems frequently to be lost sight of. It is quite true to say that the Executive will shed no tears if the original scheme is entirely demolished, provided a better scheme, acceptable to the members as a whole, arises from its ashes.

Whilst the matter is under consideration by the Districts all action is held up, and when eventually expressions of opinion have been received from every quarter, the scheme is re-drafted, after full consideration in the light of these opinions.

But even then the question is not settled. The Districts still have another say in the matter through their Councillors, because the whole scheme is finally submitted to the Council whose instructions brought the scheme into being.

When the Council meets this year it will have before it the final form of the promotion by merit scheme, and it can be taken for granted that if this does not conform to the wishes of the bulk of the members it will stand no chance of being adopted.

Before leaving this subject I would mention that the different elements likely to be directly affected by promotion by merit are ably represented on the Executive Committee. There are doughty champions of each interest. It might interest the correspondent signing himself "Av. In" to know that Mr. J. Sutton, whom he so roundly condemns, has always been a strong supporter of the very cause in which "Av. In" himself is interested. Anyone attempting to deny the legitimate rights of ex-Messengers can always rely upon having a vigorous opponent in the person of Mr. Sutton.

I refer to this incident as an example to show how easy it is to come to a wrong conclusion if insufficient evidence is relied upon. In this case the error is evidently the old one of examining a sentence without reference to its context.

* * *

It is expected that the Annual Conference of the P.S.A. will be held in July, and therefore District Secretaries are asked not to forget this fact when calling Branch meetings from now onward. Attention is drawn to the rule which provides for three months' notice to be given of any proposed amendments to the Constitution.

There are several new Councillors who will be present at this year's Conference, and I would advise them to make a careful study of the minutes of the last annual meeting, together with records of proceedings at Executive meetings held since. If any Councillor is at all doubtful on any point he should have no hesitation in seeking information from Headquarters. A successful Conference depends on the represen-

tatives being well informed, and therefore every effort is made to keep Council members up to date with Association information.

* * * *

This reminds me that the Executive have turned their attention to the task of improving organisation within the P.S.A. In the past, progress in this direction has been hampered by lack of facilities for development. Now, however, it is hoped to arrange a much-needed uniformity of practice in the Districts. As a preliminary to this the Executive have given instructions to the Secretaries to compile a short series of instruction booklets suitable for members taking up official posts in the Association. Many District officials have expressed a desire for some such guidance, and it is hoped that the steps now being taken to meet the demand will have far-reaching results.

* * * *

A report of the Executive meeting held a fortnight ago appears in this issue, so that there is no need to recount in this column any of the happenings.

A point that might be emphasised, however, is the complete success of the new Office as a meeting place. Business was despatched with a celerity and smoothness that gives promise of greatly increased efficiency in our future activities.

Another point in the report can bear repetition, and that is the reference to the successful negotiations regarding the claim for recognition of the Preventive Officer's competency to deal with Ad Valorem Duty in baggage and crews' effects. This news will be received with great satisfaction by the whole staff.

* * * *

The Annual Meeting of the Civil Service Confederation takes place on May 29th. The next meeting of the P.S.A. Executive has accordingly been fixed for the two preceding days.

J. MERRON.

IMPERIAL SERVICE MEDAL.

An interesting function took place at the Customs Office, Royal Dock, Grimsby, on March 30th, when Mr. Ellis, the Collector, on behalf of His Majesty the King, presented to Mr. W. Kitching, a recently retired P.O., the Imperial Service Medal, as an appreciation of Mr. Kitching's long and meritorious service.

In his address the Collector alluded to the fact that not only was it unique that such an honour should be bestowed by His Majesty, but that the gentleman upon whom the honour was conferred came of a Grimsby family which had at all times taken an active part in local municipal affairs.

Mr. Chaplin, C.P.O., and several members of the staff associated themselves with the Collector's remarks, and spoke of the high esteem in which Mr. Kitching was held by his former brother officers.

PREVENTIVE STAFF ASSOCIATION.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

Report of the tenth meeting, held on March 25th and 26th, 1926, at the Association Offices, London.

Mr. E. P. Madden presided over a full meeting, composed of Messrs. J. Merron, J. T. Sutton, A. W. Purdye, A. N. Lake, J. A. O'Connor, J. W. Booker (vice R. W. Booth), and W. H. Powell (Minute Secretary).

THE OFFICE.

In opening the proceedings, the chairman spoke of the latest progressive step made in Association history. He desired that it be placed on record the appreciation of the foresight of the Secretaries in recommending that the Association take over this office. The manifold advantages of such project could not, at this early stage, be measured, but it was quite easy of anticipation.

Mr. Sutton, in his report later, referred to this subject, this time from a financial aspect. He stated that he was agreeably surprised at the very low liability thrown on the P.S.A. funds by this innovation. In fact, he prophesied that the actual cost each year would be reduced to a ridiculously low figure by the saving of rent for meetings, the saving on duplicating and the revenue from the hire of the office for meetings.

The E.C. fixed fees for the hiring of the office by other associations.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION.

The E.C. was much concerned at the delay caused by several districts not submitting the local points of view. It had been hoped that if the Districts as a whole had replied in any measure of promptitude, the Central Committee would have been elected and the scheme floated immediately after the last examination.

The situation will now be dealt with at the Annual Council Meeting.

TRAINING OF ASST. PREV. OFFICERS.

It appeared that there existed a misunderstanding as to why certain amendments to this scheme had been ruled out-of-order at the last meeting. A word of explanation might suffice. The E.C. has considered and finally adopted an amended scheme. This scheme will be placed before the Council, and there, it is hoped, the councillors for the Districts concerned will produce and develop the amendments that the E.C. is now powerless to deal with.

PROMOTION BY MERIT.

Several amendments to the scheme adopted at the last meeting had been received from Districts, and these will in due course be placed before the Council.

No further action will be taken by this Committee until instructions are forthcoming from the full Council.

SENIORITY OF POST-WAR ENTRANTS.

New suggested methods of arriving at the solution to this knotty problem had been received too late for circulation, and it was decided to adjourn to allow the circulation of these and any other suggestions that arrive in the meantime, to the E.C.

AD VALOREM AND SILK GOODS.

It was reported that an agreement had been reached on the Departmental Council to amend General Orders 32 and 36 of 1926, in order to make it clearly the normal duty of Preventive Officers to assess and receive duty on these goods, subject to the usual limitations as to value.

This is an agreement giving "credit where credit is due," and it is to be welcomed as removing yet another of the obstacles preventing full valuation of P.O.'s work.

WATERGUARD CLAIMS.

Following on the instructions given at the last E.C. meeting, the Secretaries reported progress and recommended a certain line of action. The Committee approved the suggestion submitted, and adjourned the matter pending certain developments.

RECRUITMENT.

Mr. Merron reported that the Staff Side (W.S.C.) had submitted a statement in support of claims, to the Official Side: this was being considered.

It is desired to effect an early settlement of this long-outstanding question.

NEW DISTRICT OFFICERS.

The E.C. has for some time been alive to the difficulties that beset the path of an officer taking over the responsibilities of the onerous task of district (or local) organisation or secretaryship. In order to assist these volunteers and to ensure that every ounce of pull given by these ardent supporters will be utilised to the full, instructions have been given to the General and Assistant Secretaries to draw up guides to the different offices.

It is hoped that this step towards uniformity of action and effort will be appreciated.

SMALL PORTS SUB-COMMITTEE.

The representatives on this committee reported that at a meeting held the previous day if had been possible to effect some very satisfactory, and in some cases long overdue, adjustments of small ports allowances.

The work of this sub-committee is much appreciated, and the E.C. expressed approval of action taken.

Instructions were given on several other matters, and these, together with those subjects mentioned, will be dealt with more fully in the minutes to be circulated.

W. H. POWELL.

CARDIFF.

A District Association Meeting was held on March 25th, with Mr. G. Warne in the chair.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION.—It was decided that the scheme be accepted as outlined by the Committee.

HOUSING (Association Investment).—The meeting did not agree that Association funds should be invested in this scheme.

PROMOTION BY MERIT.—The opinion prevailed that a plebiscite of the A.P.O. grade should be taken. It was also decided that the time was opportune to advance a Waterguard claim for the duty of the examination of free goods.

The "CUSTOMS JOURNAL" came in for some discussion, and it was thought that the financial position of the C.J. should be more fully explained in the balance sheet.

The following officers were elected: Chairman, Mr. G. A. Warne; Vice-Chairman, Mr. C. Hill; District Secretary, Mr. P. A. Owen; District Organiser, Mr. C. Goodliffe.

It was decided that every A.P.O. should be supplied with an electric lamp.

The meeting was fairly well attended, members from Swansea and Barry being present, also Mr. G. E. N. Griffiths, E.C., of Newport.

GRAVESEND.

A special meeting was called to discuss the Promotion by Merit Scheme, and many attended, the number being far above average.

The chairman, in opening the meeting, expressed the view that the scheme should be debated upon first, and resolutions would be taken later on in the evening. The Secretary informed the meeting that he had written all the outports in the District, and that he had received replies from all, which were then read. The scheme was then debated upon by all present for a good two hours. The votes of the outports were then discussed, and the resolution was then moved, "That the minutes of this meeting, with any amendments, shall be circulated to all the District members, and their vote shall be accepted." It was carried unanimously.

A member present then moved the adoption of the scheme as submitted by the Executive. An amendment to the scheme, "That the period of years in par. 2 be increased to eight," was carried. Another amendment to the scheme, "That service marks be allowed to ex-service ex-Boy Messengers" was defeated. The scheme as amended was then put to the vote, and the meeting rejected the scheme by a narrow margin.

Circulars relating to housing, recruitment, vocational education, and "The Civilian" were dealt with, and the meeting, after hearing the Executive's proposals in each case, decided to support the Executive.

The meeting then closed with a hearty vote of thanks to the chair at 10.30 p.m.

C.S. BENEVOLENT FUND.

The annual meeting of this society held recently (Sir Malcolm G. Ramsay, K.C.B., Chairman), was largely attended by representatives of many Government Departments.

The Hon. Treasurer presented the cash accounts for 1925, and in the course of an interesting speech gave the following figures:—

Subscriptions, £6,511, an increase of £1,072; Donations, £260; Dividends and Bank Interest, £1,151; Present value of Investments, £25,253; Grants paid, £5,949, an increase of £971; Subscriptions to Orphanages, £603; Grants to widows and others were made in 133 cases; Grants to distressed Civil Servants were made in 132 cases; Average value of Pensions granted, £21 17s. 6d.; Average value of Grants to widows, £24 11s. 3d.; Average value of Grants in "D" cases, £21 5s. 5d.

During 10 years subscriptions have reached £93,459, and grants have reached £93,467.

Cash balance on Dec. 31st was £2,101, but out of this £1,532 is payable in 1926 for grants already sanctioned.

The Hon. Treasurer pointed out that the one object of the fund was to relieve distress in all Departments, irrespective of rank, and its slogan was, "Subscriptions are not invested."

During the meeting, 49 grants were made to widows and other dependent relatives of deceased Civil Servants, amounting to £929, and 35 grants to distressed Civil Servants, in cases of prolonged illness, operations and convalescent treatment. These grants amounted to £663.

The following offices were filled by election: Chairman, Sir Malcolm G. Ramsay, K.C.B., Comptroller & Auditor-General; Deputy Chairman, Sir Reginald H. Brade, G.C.B. (late) Secretary of the War Office; Hon. Treasurer, Mr. A. T. Turpin, O.B.E., 76, Underhill Road, S.E.22 (telephone, Sydenham 1775); Hon. Secretary, Mr. T. B. Hildesley, I.S.O., "Lynden," Claygate, Surrey (telephone, Ffsher 317); Asst. Hon. Secretary, Mr. J. R. Burnage, I.S.O., 29, Hollingbourne Road, S.E.24 (telephone, Brixton 1105); Committee, Messrs. W. C. Barber, M.B.E., Board of Education; W. R. Codling, C.V.O., C.B.E., H.M. Stationery Office; R. H. Davis, Customs and Excise; H. B. Denham, Charity Commission; A. E. Faulkner, C.B., C.B.E., Board of Trade; E. V. Fleming, C.B., War Office; T. D. James, C.B.E., Admiralty; C. H. O'Brien, M.B.E., National Insurance Audit Dept.; G. W. Stonestreef, C.B.E., Inland Revenue; and W. M. Wilson, M.B.E., Ministry of Health; Sub-Committee for Distress Cases, Messrs. J. R. Burnage, C. H. W. O'Brien, A. T. Turpin, and W. M. Wilson; Hon. Auditors, Messrs. A. E. Watling (late) Admiralty; W. Fortescue-Barratt, (late) Exchequer and Audit Dept.; S. H. Wisdom, F.I.A., Ministry of Pensions.

The Hon. Treasurer appealed for not less than £7,000 from subscriptions during 1926, in

order that the amount of distress now prevalent in the Civil Service might be more adequately dealt with.

CIVIL SERVICE HOUSING.

The second circular of the Civil Service Housing Association, which has now been issued, is an encouraging document. It announces that the Association can offer its members:—

Houses to let at £38 to £50 a year, subject to a deposit of £50, returnable at the end of the tenancy. These are in a garden city about 20 miles from London. Each house has three bedrooms and one or two sitting-rooms.

Houses for sale without deposit, i.e., the whole of the purchase price is payable by instalments spread over a period of years, prices from £750 freehold to £1,500 freehold. This applies to two estates within easy reach of London.

Houses for sale with 10% deposit, the repayment in the first five years being subject to a considerable abatement which is spread over the remainder of the term. This arrangement is designed to help members whose progress on the incremental scale will absorb the increased charge. This arrangement is of wide application, and means in effect that a deposit of 10% of the value will, through the Association, secure any desired house.

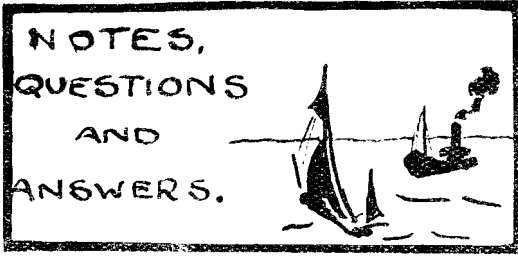
The Housing Association has arranged for advances at the rate of 5½% per annum, as against the 6% and 6½% which many Civil Servants are now paying.

This is not a bad record for just over a month's work. It is, however, only a small foretaste of what can be done if Civil Servants of all Grades (however much or little money they have) will place *all* their housing business in the hands of the Association at an early stage. It has been proved that a Civil Servant can obtain better terms through the Association than by driving his own bargain.

Provincial groups are now in course of formation, and the Secretary is desirous of hearing from other centres.

In the Saving Section the Association is prepared to receive money on deposit either weekly, monthly, or quarterly from 10s. upwards. Interest will be paid on these deposits, and apart from the use of the system which it is hoped will be made by those junior officers who are saving for house purchase, it is hoped that senior officers and others will deposit any spare money available with the Housing Association, in order to benefit their colleagues by the mobilisation of credit, which will be represented by the aggregate of the deposits.

Copies of the Circular and full particulars can be obtained from the Secretary, Civil Service Housing Association, Parliament Mansions, Victoria Street, S.W.1.



All contributions relative to this column should be addressed to "Scrutator," c/o The Editor, 59, Elita Street, Deptford, London, S.E.8.

Answers to questions given at the examination held on February 9th, 1926, first paper:—

2.—Describe fully what action you would take as a Preventive Officer in dealing with the following cases:—

(a) A passenger on landing from Boulogne produces to you two new silk dresses, stating they were purchased in Paris the day before. She informs you she is en route to America, where she resides, and that one of the dresses is intended as a present to her daughter in New York and the other for her own use.

(b) On examining the effects of a Chinese seaman you discover a quantity of raw opium concealed among clothing.

(c) The master of a vessel on arrival, from Marseilles, at the boarding station reports a case of sickness on board, but is unable to state its nature as there is no surgeon on board.

(d) On production of three cases of spirits removed from another port for shipment as stores, you discover in the case selected for examination that four bottles have been broken.

Answer.

2 (a).—If satisfied that the dresses are reasonable and are consistent with the circumstances of the case, duty may be waived. The production of a through ticket to America, or a passport showing an address in that country, or a suitable declaration may be required to verify statements. In case of suspicion, duty on deposit would be required.

(b) Thoroughly examine all the effects. Determine the opium. Obtain all possible information as to the source from which the drug was obtained. Arrest and charge the offender with the offence contrary to Section 186, Customs Consolidation Act, 1876. Report the particulars to my superior officer for his attendance at the court to prosecute. An information is to be exhibited, and the penalty to be sued for would be £100, or treble the value of the goods, whichever is the greater.

(c) Question the master closely as to the sickness on board; also as to ports the vessel had touched at on her voyage. Request his

written replies on Form 226, reminding him of his obligation to assist in the prevention of the introduction of disease into the country.

If from the written reply, or from any other cause, I suspected that the ship was "infected" or "suspected," I would withhold pratique, detain the ship, order it to be moored at the most convenient place, request the master to allow no one to land until the vessel should be released, and inform the Port Medical Officer in the most expeditious manner possible. Form 222 would be completed and forwarded to the local Port Sanitary Authority through the Port Medical Officer, and the case would be reported to the Board, annexing Form 226 to the report.

If the sickness appeared to be other than cholera, yellow fever or plague, the Port Medical Officer would be informed before any person left the ship, but the ship would not be detained or pratique withheld.

(d) Examine internally the whole of the consignment. Make detailed enquiries as far as practicable as to the breakage, noting the time of delivery, mode of transit, time of receipt of goods on board, whether the case or packing shows signs of having been tampered with, the condition of the capsules and wrappings, saturation of the case and wrappings, etc., with a view to discovering whether the missing spirit had been illegally consumed.

Certify short shipment accordingly, attaching a report of the above particulars to the relative shipping bills and despatch.

Endorse the inward clearing bill as to the actual quantity of spirit placed under seal.

GRAVESEND DEBATING SOCIETY.

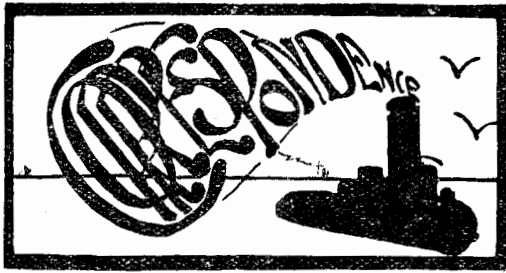
The fourth meeting of the Society was held at the Liberal Club on Tuesday, March 2nd, with Mr. H. Keeble in the chair.

A very interesting discussion took place on a resolution "That a person who commits suicide is a hero." The proposer, Mr. A. Richardson, made out a very good case, and was keenly opposed by Mr. C. W. Thorogood. The ensuing discussion brought forward many interesting and intelligent points. The ballot showed a majority in favour of the opposition.

The fifth meeting was held on March 16th, when Mr. A. Richardson occupied the chair.

The subject debated was "That ignorance is a blessing," proposed by Mr. A. W. Purdye and opposed by Mr. G. W. Grace. The arguments made caused a long and interesting debate, both sides being keenly supported. This keenness was clearly shown in the ballot, which resulted in an equal number of votes for each side. The Chairman awarded his casting vote to the proposer.

As the result of a subsequent resolution, it was decided to organise a team debate in the form of a mock trial to be held at an early date.



The name and address of the writer (not necessarily for publication) should be given in all letters to the Editor, who accepts no responsibility for the views expressed.

PROMOTION BY MERIT.

Sir,—Please allow me to broadcast, through the medium of the "C.J.," the position of ex-service ex-Boy Messengers in regard to the E.C.'s suggested scheme of promotion by merit.

By G.O. 27-1923 these men were accorded priority over all other post-war entrants. This was the result of the carefully considered decision of the old and indisputably unbiassed Association leaders. The suggested scheme, embracing members of the above category, if approved by the majority, will be presented to the Official Side.

It is unreasonable to expect these ex-Messengers to agree to a scheme which would deprive them of their undoubted rights to priority by considerably reducing their chances of promotion; but owing to their small and scattered numbers it is impossible for them to protect their vested interests by tabling any motion, as such could not be carried in consequence of the biassed representation at District meetings.

This, in effect, means that the destiny of these men is placed in the hands of all other biassed interests who, not unnaturally, will approve or disapprove of the scheme in their own interests without the least consideration of the effect upon the vested interests of those concerned. In other words, the prejudicial action of a majority is forcing its will upon a negligible minority of ex-Boy Messengers.

Now, surely the old Prussian doctrine, "Might is right," has not to prevail in this case; for to any impartial body the gross injustice must be glaringly apparent.—Yours, etc.,

JUSTICE.

Sir,—I am one of the 1923 entrants, and I welcome the suggested Promotion by Merit scheme. I gather from the correspondence of the opponents of the scheme that the ex-service Boy Messengers are a poor lot, which must be protected from any competition if they are to obtain promotion.

Funny "Uncle Joe" thinks that not only the ex-Service Boy Messengers, but all other A.P.O.'s whom the scheme will make eligible for examination, are of such poor material that they will not stand an earthly chance in competition with the men who have already given evidence on two occasions of their inability to secure promotion.

With the exception of "Uncle Joe," all appear to be agreed that increased competition will raise the standard for promotion. The Service will certainly gain, and it is creditable to our Association that such a proposal should be made.

I am afraid that the ex-Service Boy Messengers are suffering from an "inferiority complex" in that they think they have more to fear from their suggested competitors than their suggested competitors have to fear from them. I do not quite understand the justice of the ex-Service Boy Messengers' claim for preferential treatment. I think they were very fortunate in being Boy Messengers, but I see no particular virtue in having been such. Asking that the standard should not be raised to them is not a claim of which they can boast. The proposed scheme will make it more difficult for us all, but it *will* give us a chance. Under the existing scheme I shall be fortunate if I am given a chance before I am 58 years of age. I prefer to suffer keener competition and take my chance whilst still, Yours, etc.,

"N.E.B."

Sir,—Our District Association meetings are now carried on with such a degree of strictness that it has become necessary for me to study the "Constitution and Rules." During my perusal of these I noticed that Rule 2a is interpreted as meaning "All for each and each for all." I cannot see, however, how our Executive has reconciled the sentiment underlying the Promotion by Merit scheme with this fundamental principle.

The scheme will benefit the gifted and lucky few to the detriment of the majority. Under the old method of promotion all officers will stand a fifty-fifty chance, however late in life. Under the suggested scheme the majority of those eligible to sit at the next examination (about 400, excluding failed A.P.O.'s) will never be P.O.'s.

I therefore submit that the Executive, by promulgating this scheme, has departed from the fundamental principle of our organisation.—Yours, etc.,

"AV. IX."

CUSTOMS FUND MORTGAGE INTEREST.

Sir,—Many of your readers are interested in the above subject, and I shall be glad if you can give me space for a reply I have made to "Not Victimised," who, in the C. and E. Federation "Journal" of the 6th ult., asserts in effect that the Fund is dearer than other societies.

I wish "Not Victimised" had gone further and proved his case instead of resting content with half-truths about other societies. Prior to my election to the Fund Directorate I promised to investigate, amongst other questions, that of interest on house mortgages. After a long period of inquiry I cannot find a sound case against the 6 per cent. charged by the Fund to members. All the facts should be taken into account; and all the conditions, not merely some of them, under which various organisations and councils lend money for house purchase should be reviewed with care. On a balance the Fund has it. The published conditions governing house purchase advances to members show that:

Full survey value is usually advanced, and this is often the same as the purchase price.

Within reasonable limits, reduction or suspension of instalments is allowed without fine.

Additional payments can be made at any time with a corresponding saving of interest, or the whole loan can be repaid without notice.

Further advances can be negotiated during repayment when the security permits.

Income tax on the interest charged is credited to the account and has the effect of the additional payments referred to above.

Legal and incidental expenses are restricted to a minimum.

On the published conditions alone it would be difficult to find an organisation that could compete on a business footing, even where the rate of interest appears to be, and in certain cases is, lower than that charged by the Customs Fund.

But that is not all. The full name of the Customs Fund is "The Customs Amenity and Benevolent Fund, Incorporated," and it is not an empty name. There is elasticity of a rare order in the Fund. I may not say much about that aspect of its business, but it may be sufficient to say that it knows its members, and it is worth a good deal to the borrower in temporary difficulties that he can rely upon a sympathetic treatment which cannot be equalled by any other organisation.—Yours, etc.,

W. LITTLER.

19, East Dalwich Road, S.E.

Sir,—Although a one-time Secretary of this journal, I have never before attempted to add to its pages. However, after reading the allegations of "Uncle Joe" with reference to the treatment of the post-war entrants at the hands of the pre-war gentlemen, I feel that such unmitigated inventions call for a stern reply. Since the conclusion of the war the P.S.A. has been faced with grave problems arising out of Re-organisation, post-war entrants' wages and seniority, the future of failed A.P.O.'s, etc. I am confident that whatever schemes are being launched, the movers are prompted by a desire to benefit *all*. Suspicion is soul destroying and a most unhealthy factor in Association affairs.

I appeal to all members to cultivate a spirit of loyalty and generosity towards each other,

and by so doing keep alive the main object for which our Association was formed, i.e., mutual assistance.—Yours, etc.,
CONCORD.

Sir,—On first reading "Uncle Joe's" letter in the last issue my feelings were those of risibility, but let me haste to add, lest I be misunderstood, that I was not moved to hilarity by the writer's attempt at witticism.

Having sufficiently confused the issue by ventose and ineffectual attempts at humour, he displays his ignorance of the thoughtful and searching endeavour of the Executive to find a way out of the impasse at which we shall soon find ourselves. To make myself clear I cannot do better than to quote his own words: "It appears to have been staged for the purpose of gulling the ex-Service men into the belief that instead of having to wait for about four years for an opportunity to qualify for a P.O.'s job, if they vote for this scheme they have the chance of qualifying almost at once." That is absolute nonsense, and the last sentence of his is easily the best in the whole letter. How aptly he sums up his own earlier folly in the words, "that is absolute nonsense"! How delightfully, unintentionally true!

Passing on to the bogey, he appears to be obsessed by the fact that pre-war entrants will compete with twice failed competitors. His few hundred, I am given to understand on good authority, do not exceed one hundred and fifty, and I may add that the majority of these are anathema to their own interests, as instanced recently by the paucity of replies received in answer to a request for suggestions to ameliorate their own conditions. I do not think your correspondent need be uneasy on the score of third-timers. As a post-war entrant, I believe I am expressing the sentiments of my colleagues (at least those who passed a Civil Service examination to enter the Waterguard) when I say I welcome "Promotion by Merit."

Let us as Assistant Preventive Officers pull together and welcome schemes that promote the chances of ambitious and efficient colleagues of rising to more responsible posts. Let us step stellarwards—not meander through the mud of mediocrity.—Yours, etc.,

"PALMAM QUI MERUIT FERAT."

OBITUARY.

Mr. A. J. HEWETT.

The death of Mr. A. J. Hewett, P.O., London, has come as a shock to his many friends and colleagues. Losing his wife only a week previously, he succumbed on April 3rd to an attack of pneumonia.

Mr. Hewett has been a well-known figure in London Waterguard circles for many years. He served previously at Wisbech, where the news of his decease will be received with genuine regret.