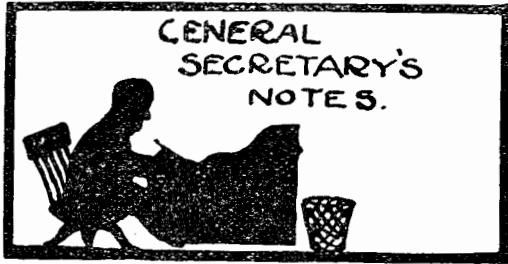


The Customs Journal.

No. 572.

September 25th, 1926.

Fortnightly.



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

Though for most of us the holiday season has already departed, the weather is charming enough to tempt one to forget the unpleasant fact. At any rate, at the moment of writing, it is sultry enough to be remarkable, and to make even the holding of a pen seem like work.

No matter how seductive the weather might be, however, full activity has been resumed in all Service Associations and Staff Sides. Matters of importance to the whole Civil Service are receiving urgent attention, and circumstances are such that any lack of vigilance during the next few months might have disastrous consequences for the Service.

The great need of the moment is to maintain a solid unity amongst Civil Servants. Many "red herrings" have been trailed in the past with a view to creating disunity; but, thanks to the Defence Committee, they have served only to bind us closer.

Now, however, we have something more formidable to contend with. With diabolical cunning, our enemies have managed to let loose amongst us the great political bogey, and, unless cool and clear judgment is preserved, it might easily succeed in producing those ideal conditions of chaos so suitable for the business of pocket-picking.

It is gratifying to know that the Confederation is tackling the situation in vigorous fashion. Constituent Associations are sacrificing much in order that unity may not be lost, and there are good grounds for stating that the newspaper plot to split the Service is not likely to meet with much success after all.

* * * *

The "Morning Post," despite its anti-Service attitude, has hitherto been looked upon by many Civil Servants as a fairly respectable foe, but the recent attempts of that paper to put the stamp of "Communism" on the Institution of Professional Civil Servants have now caused it to be regarded in quite a different light.

It would be difficult to find an Association more innocent of Communistic tendencies than is the Institution, and, if the matter were not so serious, it would be an occasion for a good laugh. It is all the more serious because perfectly polite letters addressed to the "Morning Post" by the Institution, complaining of the misrepresentation, have, before publication, been mutilated in such a manner that they give an entirely wrong impression to the public.

When it is realised that a leading newspaper can be guilty of such unfair treatment, one shudders to think of what might be the result if Lord Beaverbrook's suggestion were adopted under which the chiefs of the newspaper world would become the expert advisers to the Government.

It must be admitted, however, that the task of thus assisting in the sacred duty of government might possibly improve Press morals. There is nothing like responsibility for sobering people; and there is nothing quite like the irresponsibility of the modern Press.

* * * *

Now that we have suffered that painful reduction of bonus, the cost-of-living figure has begun to show what it can do in an upward direction. The figure for September is 72, being

an increase of two points. It is very likely that this trend will be maintained until the end of the year.

The question of consolidation is really of very much importance, and therefore it is somewhat surprising that members have not been stirred to make some expression of their views through the medium of the "Journal." It would also be an excellent subject for discussion at District meetings, and, if such discussions could take place now, things would be simplified if it ever becomes necessary for the Association to declare its attitude on this question.

It is more than probable that P.S.A. opinion would be against consolidation, at least, under existing circumstances; but it should not be forgotten that the soundness of applying the bonus system to normal industrial conditions has not by any means been proved. Attaching to the principle there are dangers to wage-earners, and these could, no doubt, be easily demonstrated if the case were properly debated.

Present industrial conditions are, of course, far from normal, and the reasons which made the introduction of the bonus scheme necessary are still in existence. It would be most unwise to abandon the scheme at a time when basic salary is still being fixed with a great deal more regard for economy than for the just value of the work to which it relates.

When the Civil Service emerges triumphant from the struggle against those sinister forces that now attempt to crush it by a weight of prejudice, our representatives will be sufficiently powerful to secure proper revision of unjust salary scales and to thwart all attempts at underpayment; and, provided there has been considerable improvement in economic conditions when that time arrives, it is pretty certain that Civil Servants will indicate their preference for stabilised remuneration.

* * * *

The following information is given in response to requests I have received.

The original cost-of-living figure was 130, and this, after many fluctuations, has now descended to 70, i.e., a reduction by twelve twenty-sixths of the original. This represents

a drop of one twenty-sixth for each fall of five points from the cost-of-living figure, 130.

Revision, based on a six-monthly average, takes place in March and September each year.

To arrive at the amount of bonus due on salary, the following method is used:—

On annual salary not exceeding £500—

130 per cent. (less 12/26 at Sept. 1st) on first £91 5s.

60 per cent. (less 12/26 at Sept. 1st) on next £108 15s.

45 per cent. (less 12/26 at Sept. 1st) on excess over £200.

On weekly wages not exceeding £1 16s. 9d.—

130 per cent. (less 12/26 at Sept 1st) on first 35s. per week.

60 per cent. (less 12/26 at Sept. 1st) on excess over 35s. per week.

* * * *

The Ministry of Labour is responsible for the compiling of cost-of-living index figures, and these figures are based on statistics obtained, some years before the war, regarding the expenditure of an average working-class family with an income of 35s. a week.

Many people imagine that food is the only item taken into consideration in determining the cost of living, but this is not so. Rent, clothing, fuel and light are all included.

The chief criticism against this method of working out the cost of living is that statistics more than twenty years old must be now quite out of date. They were gathered at a time when the working classes lived on the very cheapest kind of food. The alarmingly low physical standard of so many of our countrymen which was revealed under the examination by military doctors, has been attributed to injurious diet and bad food generally, and, therefore, since the war, public bodies of all kinds, interested in the welfare of the nation, have used every effort to discourage the production of cheap and nasty foodstuffs. The result has been an all-round improvement in the standard of living, for the improvement in diet has, naturally enough, been followed by a better mode of living in every way.

Whenever it can be proved that a higher standard of living has been generally adopted,

it is a perfectly sound and just argument to use in a claim for increased wages.

The existing method of assessing bonus, though quite good in other respects, makes no provision for this aspect of the cost of living, and it is here that the method is faulty.

* * * *

A meeting of the Promotion Board will be held on September 29th to consider the filling of the vacancy of Waterguard Superintendent 1st Class, and consequential vacancies. The vacancy of Superintendent will occur at Liverpool.

* * * *

Speaking of promotion reminds me that some publicity has been given to the following resolution now under consideration by the Staff Side of the Ministry of Labour Council:—

“That it is in the best interests of the Ministry to facilitate the promotion of qualified members of the staff to more responsible and remunerative positions and to extend as widely as possible the field of selection for such posts when vacancies occur.”

I make reference to the matter here because there has been some suggestion in favour of a general discussion of the topic, and P.S.A. members might consider the occasion important enough for the expression of their opinion through the columns of the “Journal.”

* * * *

I hear that for various reasons it has not been possible in some cases to return within the specified time the voting papers in connection with the Seniority Ballot. In view of this, the closing date has been postponed to the last day of this month. Every precaution is being taken to ensure each affected officer will have opportunity to record his vote.

A certain amount of misunderstanding seems to have arisen regarding the nature of this ballot, and therefore I would emphasise the point that the question to be decided concerns only that class of officers specially referred to in the circular attached to the ballot form. Whatever the outcome of the voting may be, it will not affect 1923 Entrants nor ex-Messengers with vested interests.

It is the business of the Association to consider the interests of all its members, and there is no reason to imagine that this occasion will be an exception.

When the result of the voting is known, the Executive will then consider all its possible effects very carefully before taking any action.

* * * *

Favourable progress is being made in the negotiations for the appointing of an Arbitrator to deal with outstanding cases for re-assessment of bonus under the Sutton judgment. Discussions are proceeding, between the Treasury and the Civil Service Joint Committee, with a view to settling the scope and conditions that will govern the operations of an Arbitrator.

* * * *

Regarding “Earmarked” cases, there is no further news to report at the moment. It is hoped, however, that it will be possible to give information of progress in the next issue of the “Journal.” It will readily be understood that this kind of claim is not willingly expedited by the Government. Persistent effort by the Staff Side is very necessary, and if the process seems slow there is good excuse for this.

J. MERRON.



PREVENTIVE STAFF ASSOCIATION.

GLASGOW.

There was a fairly large attendance at a local meeting held at Mavisbank on Friday, August 27th. Mr. J. Murchie, P.O., occupied the chair.

Replies from the Waterguard Superintendent on the subject of resolutions submitted from the previous meeting were presented. As an agreement could not be reached, it was decided to place the matters on the agenda for the next Whitley Council meeting.

The main question of the evening was the present Sunday attendance. The Official Side scheme was found to be of little assistance to the staff on duty, and it was decided to reopen the question at the next meeting of the Whitley Council.

It is expected that Mr. J. Henderson, Secretary of the Social Club, will be getting busy in the very near future, and that a meeting of the Committee will shortly be called to draw up arrangements for Whist Drives, etc., for the coming season.

HULL.

A meeting of the above was held at "The Metropole" on Sept. 8th. Mr. Nightingale, who was elected Vice-Chairman, presided.

Questions arising from the minutes were discussed and dealt with.

The minutes of the Annual Conference then occupied the attention of the members. Mr. Howard, E.C., described in detail the items discussed at the Council meeting, and explained many points which were raised by the members present. The following resolutions were proposed, seconded and carried:—

"That this Branch of the P.S.A. supports the E.C. in any action that may be considered necessary, in order that the present attitude of the Treasury, re interpretation of Whitley agreements, may be revised."

"That this Branch of the P.S.A. instructs the E.C. to take all possible steps in support of the protests against the proposed action of the Government in eliminating the affiliation of Civil Service associations with outside organisations."

Local affairs were discussed, and proposed action approved.

A vote of confidence in the district E.C.'s was unanimously carried. This terminated the meeting. A vote of thanks was accorded the chairman.

RETIREMENT.

Mr. Charles Titheridge, Preventive Officer at Charlestown, has just retired from the Service. An interesting photograph of him appears in the "Western Morning News" of a recent date.

Mr. Titheridge entered the Service in 1891. He was stationed at Harwich until 1897, when he transferred to Cowes. There he remained until 1911, removing in that year to London. Ten years later he was appointed to Charlestown, where he has been a very popular official.

He served in the War from 1914 to 1917 with the 6th Essex Regiment, and wears the Volunteer decoration for twenty-one years' service in the Territorial Army.

THE NATIONAL WHITLEY COUNCIL (Staff Side) & THE PRIME MINISTER.

With reference to the Prime Minister's decision not to receive a deputation from the Staff Side of the N.W.C., the following letter was sent to the Premier:—

August 27th, 1926.

The Right Hon. Stanley Baldwin, M.P.,
10, Downing Street, S.W.1.

SIR,—

I am desired by the Staff Side of the National Whitley Council for the Civil Service to refer to your letter of July 28th last, expressing your decision not to receive a deputation on the questions of procedure of Whitley Councils in the Civil Service and the working of the Arbitration Agreement, and to say that the decision was received with profound regret and disappointment by the members of the Staff Side. It is not clear from the letter what is the exact ground of refusal to receive the proposed deputation. The Staff Side can appreciate the difficulty the Head of the Government must necessarily experience in finding time to receive deputations, and if this had been the only reason given for not acceding to their request, the difficulty could have been met by the Staff Side waiting until circumstances made an interview convenient. They are, however, disturbed to find that one reason given for your decision not to see them is the fact that recently they were afforded an opportunity of discussing the questions at issue with the Financial Secretary to the Treasury. I hoped that it would have been clear from the terms of my letter of April 29th last that the matters it was desired to discuss with you raised questions of principle that could not readily be settled by Treasury decision.

If it were admitted by the Staff Side that the fact of an interview with the Financial Secretary to the Treasury was in itself a reason why the Prime Minister should not be seen on Service questions, very serious difficulties would be created for staff representatives, who claim the right in cases in which important principles are involved to appeal to the Head of the Government. The interview the Staff Side had with Mr. Ronald McNeill elicited a reply from the Financial Secretary to the Treasury representing the Government in the capacity of employer, but I am to submit that the question of the rights of State servants raises bigger issues for the Government of the day than the mere question of working relations between Departments as employers and Civil Servants as employed

persons. The view of the Staff Side is that matters of high principle affecting the relationship of Civil Servants to the State are in the last resort questions of public policy. On subjects which are grave enough to cause intense dissatisfaction throughout all ranks of the Civil Service the Staff Side believe that it is not unreasonable that the Prime Minister should satisfy himself personally of the matters at issue.

I am to suggest that such a responsibility cannot be discharged by making enquiries from one only of the parties to a dispute, and that it cannot reasonably be expected that the Staff Side should feel satisfied that their case should be expressed and their views represented to the Prime Minister by officials whose own opinions may have influenced the very decisions the Staff Side would desire to contest.

In regard to the paragraphs in your letter referring to the constitution of the National Council, your decision leaves the Staff Side, and Civil Service organisations in general, in a very unfortunate position. The Staff Side cannot rest satisfied with a state of affairs that not only debars the National Council from acting as a Court of Appeal, but prevents at all points and under all circumstances any possibility of questions being raised affecting the interpretation of agreements. It is difficult to believe that the one-sided position the Staff Side find themselves in is fully appreciated by you. An interview would have the advantage of removing the misapprehensions that must have influenced your view that there is no grievance in the existing arrangements.

On the question of the Arbitration Agreement I am asked to express the Staff Side regret that no mention is made in your letter of their complaint.

The grievances stated in my letter of April 29th are felt by all Grades of the Service, and the action of the Staff Side in seeking an opportunity to make oral representations to the Prime Minister is supported by all sections of the Staff Side without exception. In the event of your decision proving final, the active discontent now felt will be greatly increased and the House of Commons will have to be troubled constantly with matters that should be settled through the machinery of the National Council.

I may remind you that when the National Council was established, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, who, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, presided at a representative Conference, on July 3rd, 1919, announced that the Government intended to work the new machinery in the spirit

in which it was conceived. In welcoming the advent of joint working, he said:—

“ You know that I desire as strongly and as cordially as anyone that the relations between the Government and its employees should be friendly and contented relations, and that the Service should not only do its best, but feel that it is made easy for it to do its best, by the appreciation shown by those who represent the State of the conditions under which they work and under which they live. . . . Having accepted them (the provisions of the Report) you may be quite sure I mean to abide faithfully by them and to work them loyally.”

The Staff Side have endeavoured to respond to the sentiments expressed by Sir Austen Chamberlain, and they regret that in matters that clearly affect the interests of the Service it should be found necessary to appeal to the Prime Minister. I have, therefore, to express the hope that in regard to the questions now at issue you will, as the custodian of the interests of the staff and responsible to Parliament and the public for fair play to Civil Servants, favourably reconsider your decision and agree to receive a deputation.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Sgd.) G. MIDDLETON.

PROSECUTION.

HARWICH.

At Harwich Police Court, on the 9th inst., a Japanese student, passenger from the s.s. “ St. George,” from Hook of Holland, was charged with concealing two watches and also with attempting to bribe a Customs officer.

The magistrates decided to deal with the case of smuggling, on which the defendant was found guilty and fined the single duty-paid value, amounting to £4.

Mr. J. T. Allwork, C.P.O. prosecuted. The goods were found wrapped in clothing in the defendant's baggage by Mr. W. J. Day, A.P.O.

“ BRASIER ” APPEAL.

The following additional sums have been received and forwarded to Mr. Brasier, A.P.O.: Portishead, 2s.; Weymouth, 12s.; Tyne District, £2 14s. 6d.; Blyth, 7s. 6d.; Exmouth, 10s.; Total, £4 6s.



Our next issue will contain the last of the answers to the questions set at the examination in February. Aspirants to honours at the next examination would do well to look to their knotty points. Our good friend, "Scrutator," having done much useful work during the past three years or so, prefers to write on subjects that are really wanted. It is therefore up to correspondents to keep him supplied with points upon which they desire advice. His time and labour are wasted if he is left to fish for subjects and it is of little use letting him ramble off on deck cargo regulations when you want to know something about silk duties or are doubtful about some obscure point in the Public Health Act. Don't keep your doubts to yourself. The information you gain will be useful to somebody else.

* * * *

The formation of a cricket team in London for next season has been mentioned before and commented upon. We are interested and pleased to hear that the new club does not intend to devote all its energies to King Willow, and is giving some attention to the social entertainment of its members and friends during the winter. The idea has, of course, the question of finance in the background, and we naturally wish them all success; but they are out to provide the best they possibly can in the nature of dances, concerts and whist drives, and from the energy that is being put into it, we feel confident of ultimate success. We have heard a rumour that the membership of the new club will be at least forty. Good luck!

* * * *

Having obtained an interview with the General Secretary at the P.S.A. Headquarters one evening this week, we discovered him up to his eyes in work. Only those who can catch him at such times can realise the amount of work that has to be got through. His daily correspondence list is very heavy indeed, and would do credit to a respectable City firm. Added to this is the heavy programme that has resulted from the recent Conference. If evidence of the need for a central office were necessary, surely it is here, for the business of the Association as it is to-day could not possibly be carried on at home. We were able to see the system of filing, which is quite up-to-date and a triumph of organisation, for the digging out of any reference is only a matter of a few seconds. Mr. Merron has benefited from his period of rest, but he has a gruelling time before him.

THE COAL STRIKE AND ITS EFFECT ON THE STAFF.

A big national disturbance such as the present coal dispute cannot fail to have far-reaching influence on the life of the nation in one way or another. There may be a few instances where individuals have benefited by an increase of work due to this cause, but many industries and the nation generally are suffering from the natural dislocation which is the direct result of the strike. The effect on the Water-guard, if it reflects credit upon the patience of the staff in several of the large ports, certainly is not producing a happy state of affairs, and judging from the fact that many Preventive Officers are gradually being snowed under by various documents and ships' files awaiting completion, it seems that the time is rapidly approaching when some of the stations will be in such a state of confusion that a normal state of affairs will only be reached when the Water-guard has, as usual, achieved the impossible. We hear that staffs have been reduced in the coal ports, but whether this has happened or not, there is no doubt whatever that part of the staffs of practically all the big ports is being badly overworked. There are a number of stations where the work has doubled and is being carried out by the same original staff, the stations in some instances being those that are known as "stiff." Overtime is, of course, put down with an iron hand, but we can quote concrete cases where Preventive Officers, in order to keep their work within reasonable bounds, are taking documents of various kinds home with them and putting in as much as three hours at home for four or five nights a week. Needless to say, these officers are doing this in defiance of their own principle, and they would have been most indignant if such a thing was suggested during normal times. Faced with the situation, however, they realise that it is for the time being the only thing that is practicable. Other officers we could mention are appearing for duty at such times as six in the morning in order to have a quiet hour or two to prevent getting into a hopeless muddle, and even then find it impossible to get away until an hour or so after their time for leaving the station. The time shown for official duties is, however, eight hours.

The question naturally arises as to why this sort of thing has been allowed to develop, and there are those who have not hesitated to blame the Association for not taking a hand in helping to ease the lot of those who are unfortunate enough to be at present on these particular stations. The fact is that the Association officials have never yet been asked to take action of any kind, and that simply for the reason that the men concerned have been too weary to think of anything else but rest. There is always the lurking fear, too, that to complain that it is impossible to cope with the work is to label oneself as incompetent, and one hesitates to run such a risk. At the same time, we feel certain

that the C.P.O.'s in charge of these stations are willing to testify to the competence of the staffs under their supervision, and to the tremendous amount of work that has been got through.

This extra pressure has now been going on for months, and the staff was ready to put up with it for a feek of two until the strike should finish and the country could return once more to normal. This is another reason why no action has been taken. The weeks have lengthened into months and the strike appears to have become part of our national life. Under these conditions something will have to be done, and we understand that the Association is being supplied with the necessary information in order that conditions may be rectified.



All contributions relative to this column should be addressed to "Scrutator," c/o The Editor, 91, Tressillian Road, Brockley, London, S.E.4.

Answers to questions given at Examination held February 9th, 1926: Second Paper.

Question No. 5.—The master of a vessel from Jamaica has declared on List 142 and produces on arrival—

- 1 10/16 lb. Cavendish Tobacco;
- 2 bottles of Rum, each .11 gall.;
- 1 bottle of Perfumed Spirits, .05 gall.;
- 30 lb. of Sugar;
- 20 lb. of Raw Coffee.

He is leaving the vessel at once and wishes to take these goods with him. What would he have to pay to obtain delivery assuming he does not claim preferential rates of duty?

Answer—

1 10/16 lb. Cav. Tobacco at 11/10½	...	...	£0	19	3
22/100 gall. Rum at 77/10	...	...	0	17	1
30 lb. Sugar at 11/8	...	...	0	3	1
20 lb. Raw Coffee at 11/0	...	...	0	2	6
Fine	...	...	0	2	0
Amount required	...	...	£2	3	11

* * * *

The following is a question from "Chubb," and the relative answer:—

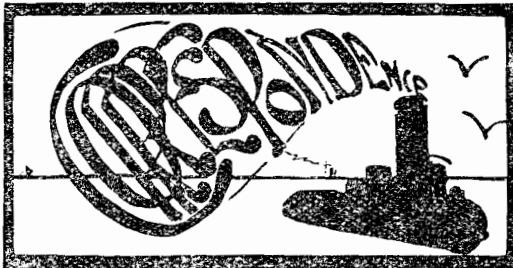
Question.—Two seizures are made on a vessel of 230 tons register from foreign:

No. 1.—30/100 gall. Perfumed Spirits; owner Seaman A;

No. 2.—1 6/16 lb. Cigars, O.S.; owner, Seaman B.

There are no incriminating circumstances or evidence of neglect. Would a deposit on the vessel be required in this case?

Answer.—A deposit of £3 would be required in this instance. The case is one where constructive neglect is assumed; the total duty involved is £2 18s. 5d. See Rule A, sub par. (4), the table following, and Rule B of paragraph 34, part 1, volume 1, Revised Instructions.



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.

THE CONFERENCE.

Sir.—Your correspondent, "Enquirer," in the issue of August 28th raises several points on matters discussed at the recent Conference, and confidently anticipates a few hard knocks in consequence. This is as it should be, for it shows that our friend is willing to admit that there is more than one way of viewing the question. In stating that the rummaging officer of ten years back is hard to find in these days he is saying something by no means new, for I heard the same remark passed many times before the war commenced. It was quite a common rebuke among the seniors of that far-away day. One thing is very certain, however, and that is, that the smuggler of to-day is a different sort of individual to the smuggler of twenty years ago, and although he is very much in evidence to-day, the methods to be adopted to combat him have to be on different lines now if any success is to be achieved in providing adequate protection to the Revenue. I know

men rummaging to-day who were rummaging ten years ago, and they tell me that the old methods by themselves are of very little use, and to gain anything like success they have to conform their ideas with the march of the times. It was always a duty that demanded tact, but the need for that qualification has, with the appearance of new items in the tariff list, been increased tenfold.

But why do our people, from top to bottom, dwell so much on rummaging? Ordinary lay folk always picture a Customs Official as a chaser of smugglers, being under the impression that his only duty is the search of persons and ships, and that his only care in his journey through life is tobacco and spirits. There are those in our own Department who seem to have the same idea. "Enquirer" would seem to give the impression that rummaging is the only job in the Waterguard that requires expert knowledge, and that as such it should be placed on a higher plane and specially rewarded. The Waterguard staff performs other duties that have at least an equal right for recognition of this sort, duties that the staff is specially adapted to perform, and well qualified too. Curiously enough, these other duties are greater in number than most of our people realise, and I doubt if any officer in the Waterguard could tell off-hand how many jobs he really does do. To still single out rummaging as the one and only job entirely passes my understanding.

Regarding the salary question, the A.P.O. is by no means a handsomely paid individual, and a scheme to ease the transition from weekly wage to yearly salary is very welcome indeed, for very few are in the fortunate position of being able to meet a sudden change without embarrassment. Many a P.O. can tell of the frightful time he experienced on his promotion, when the change was coupled with a transfer to a distant port at a time when his domestic responsibilities were at their greatest. This is reason enough, I should think, for the A.P.O. to be put on a yearly basis, with the aid of the proposed scheme.—Yours, etc.,

"HANNIBAL."

◆ ◆ ◆

Sir,—I should like, through the medium of "The Customs Journal," to express my deepest thanks to all the officers throughout the United Kingdom for the generous response they gave to the appeal on my behalf. I would also like to publicly thank the committee and others who assisted in the organisation of this appeal.

I have received a total of £50 10s. 5d. from the Treasurer, which sum I may state has practically cleared me from all financial embarrassment.

Again thanking one and all on behalf of my wife, family and self,—Yours, etc.,

JAMES BRASIER.

Londonderry, Sept. 11, 1926.

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