

The Customs Journal

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Fortnightly

General Secretary's Notes

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

C. & E. Preventive Staff Association -
Thames Chambers,
13, Beer Lane,
London, E.C.B.

This, the first issue of the "Customs Journal" in the New Year, introduces a change which results from much criticism and discussion at the last Conference. To mark the occasion a new cover has been designed as a small beginning in the efforts that are being made to improve the attractiveness of the Journal.

It is hoped that the numerous critics who have been so greatly interested in the publication and management of our little paper, will now come forward and complete the business by giving substantial support in contributing to its columns.

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The "Customs Journal" is one of the pioneers amongst Civil Service publications, and, to look back over the pages of some of the early editions is to realise that in those days Association members had, generally speaking, a much firmer grip regarding knowledge of their own affairs than is evidenced to-day. There were articles and letters in abundance, dealing vigorously with current problems, clearly indicating that the writers were deeply interested and well versed in Association aims and ambitions.

It is remarkable that nowadays, when, through improved methods, the Association is able to maintain a regular system for conveying news and information to the members, through district and local secretaries, there seems to be a lethargy which prevents people taking advantage of the material available for carrying on interesting debates in the columns of the Journal.

It cannot be too definitely pointed out that the member who, having decided views against Association policy, prefers to use them to make other members disgruntled rather than test the soundness of his views through Journal publicity, is doing a great disservice to his colleagues. No matter how heterodox might be his ideas, any member has access to the Journal columns, provided he expresses himself reasonably and with proper restraint. Unfortunately, when contributions of this nature do come along, which is not often, they usually seek to undermine instead of to build up the construction of the Association. There is no need for this, and it is clearly wrong.

Judging from the progress of the elections for Councillor and other Association officials, now going on throughout the kingdom, there seems to be in some localities a deplorable apathy. In one or two places candidates have not even been nominated. Members in those Districts ought to realise how foolish is this attitude. The Annual Conference will be upon them before they know where they are, and to send delegates to this meeting who have only half-hearted support from their constituents is not only bad business but is very unfair to the representatives. It is not a bit of good asking why the Association has not done this or that if a live interest is not taken in electing the Councillors, or, having elected them, efforts are not made to put them in a strong position at the Conference.

No matter how progressive the Executive Committee might be, they are bound by the Council, and if the Council is not a powerful and truly representative body, capable of giving clear and bold decisions, expressing the views of the members generally, the Executive Committee is handicapped accordingly. The sooner this fact is fully appreciated, the sooner will we get down to real business. Energy wasted in unprofitable criticism of the Executive will be directed into more constructive channels.

It should also be borne in mind that a wide-awake and enthusiastic District will be always sufficient inspiration for producing election candidates. Enthusiastic support is what makes the exacting job of any Association official really worth while.

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The announcement of the Preventive Officers' examination for the 6th March has, no doubt, been the signal for aspirants to make an extra spurt in their studies. The date this year is later than usual and probably this will be appreciated by those who have been procrastinating. There are not likely to be many, however, for, by all accounts most of the candidates are on the top line.

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Provincial candidates are informed that any assistance that can be given them by the Association in connection with their coming to London, is at their disposal. Requests addressed to the Association Office, for information as to hotel accommodation, etc., will be readily dealt with.

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General Order 102/1927 seems to have caused quite a stir in the ranks of the Waterguard. The posts advertised therein are worth trying for. Some interesting comments have been made regarding the Leave Scales, which, with a weekly half-holiday, and Sundays and holidays off-duty, make additional attraction to the fairly comfortable salary.

For some reason, possibly a desire of the Department to retain their services, Waterguard officers are very rarely selected even for interview for posts offered in this way. There are plenty of Waterguard men capable enough for transfer to better paid departments, and the eagerness with which possibilities for transfer are looked for is noteworthy. If the number of inquiries reaching the Association, in connection with General Orders 91/1927 and 102/1927, are anything to go by, there must be a goodly number of applicants. It is likely, however, that past experience will induce some to think that the Waterguard applicant stands practically no chance.

It is not difficult to understand why the Association is exploring possibilities nearer home for improving the conditions of the members. The one department where Waterguard men would have first claim to enter has not been thrown open to the Service, and seems unlikely to be—the door, partly opened on one occasion to admit others, was slammed in our faces. That will not easily be forgotten.

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The Educational Committee have, I understand, begun a revision of the duty-table booklet issued last year. Until the Budget is out it will not, of course, be possible to complete the revision. A number of suggestions have been made, however, and several of these are to be embodied in the new issue. Nothing could be more satisfactory than the way in which these books were bought up on the last occasion, and there has been a constant demand for them throughout the year. It is not improbable that a proposal will be forthcoming for the booklet to be issued free to all members, or, at least, at a greatly reduced price.

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The Committee is also considering the production of a small handbook of concentrated information suitable for the use of Waterguard Officers. Particular attention is being paid to making the book a practical aid to officers in the ordinary course of everyday work. As soon as an outline of the subject-matter has been decided upon, the Executive will examine the proposition with a view to deciding its practicability.

The compiling of such a book is no light task, and, if the Committee are successful in their enterprise, they will have earned the gratitude of the staff.

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At a recent Committee meeting of the Customs and Excise Sports Society, the handsome cup, presented by Sir Horace Hamilton, K.B.E., as a perpetual trophy, to be awarded each year for the best individual performance in Customs and Excise sports, was on view. Consideration was given as to the method of making the award, and finally a small sub-committee was created to deal with the matter.

The Waterguard element in the Society is steadily growing, and on this occasion four representatives were present. They took the opportunity to protest against the exclusion of Waterguard Officers from membership of the rowing section of the Society.

It appears that our Department is regarded as coming within a rule of the Amateur Rowing Association whereby "riverside workers" are not eligible. No doubt there has been some misunderstanding as to the exact nature of Waterguard duties, and, it is hoped that when the position is made clear the ban will be removed.

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It seems curious that just at the time when a little band of M.P.s are stated to have impressed the Prime Minister with the necessity for drastic economy and the cutting-down of Civil Service Staffs, grave questions are raised in the House of Commons as to the serious shortage of Factory Inspectors. The truth of the inadequacy of the staff came to light at the inquest on some girls who were burned to death in a fire at a film factory.

The same M.P.s are much concerned at the supposed short hours of Civil Servants. It would be interesting to know what would be their opinions regarding the seven-day week of the Waterguard Staff, and the problematical half-day off—in most cases to facilitate a change-over to night-work. No doubt they would soon make the happy discovery that Waterguard Officers actually earn overtime—and that would be that!

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The Preventive Staff Association has now received its certificate as an Approved Association. The document is not so imposing as was expected, but is a typical product of economy conditions. All idea of having it framed has been abandoned. Anyway, now that we have it we shall be able to feel quite safe and happy.

J. MERRON.

CHANGES IN THE STAFF.

TO DECEMBER 24th, 1928.

TRANSFERS.

PREVENTIVE OFFICERS:—

Atkins, T. W., Folkestone, Dover to London.
Herrington, B. J., Newcastle to Folkestone, Dover.
King, E., London to Brightlingsea, Ipswich.
Rickard, W. P., Brightlingsea, Ipswich to Falmouth, Plymouth.

EXCHANGE:—

McBride, A., Eastham, Manchester, with Payne, E., Liverpool.

OFFICERS LEAVING THE SERVICE.

DEATH:—

Assistant Preventive Officer:—Nunn, J., Ilfracombe, Plymouth.

VACANCIES.

Assistant Preventive Officer, Ilfracombe, Plymouth. (An allowance of £20 per annum for performing Long Room work, etc., is assigned.)

SMALL PORT WORK

By "VAGRHETH"

WRECK

THE proceeds of unclaimed wreck, after payment of salvage claims, are credited to the Board of Trade. These amounts are held for twelve months, and, if no claim is made at the expiration of that period, they are diverted to the Crown coffers. All wreck must be sold at the expiration of one year from the date at which it came into the possession of the Receiver. The only case where the Board of Trade is not entitled to the proceeds of unclaimed wreck is where the Lord of the Manor has a title to it.

The coast of this country is dotted with certain stretches which are included within a Manor. These Manors were granted to certain people by Royal Charter hundreds of years ago, and the inheritors of these manorial rights can lay claim to any unclaimed wreckage washed ashore within the boundaries of the Manor. In claiming the title to unclaimed wreckage, a Lord of the Manor must prove to the satisfaction of the Board of Trade that he has inherited the Lordship of a Manor which has a right to it. The Board of Trade advise a Receiver when they admit the existence of a Manor within his district. It then becomes the duty of the Receiver to advise the Lord of the Manor on form W.R.12 of any wreckage which is not likely to be claimed within twelve months. Lords of the Manor are seldom entitled to wreck found floating, and Receivers should observe the precise terms of Board of Trade notices which are sent to them admitting claims. In most cases Lords of the Manor are only entitled to wreck washed ashore. It will be appreciated that Receivers have to exercise particular care in dealing with wreck claimed by Lords of Manors, and the exact spot where found, the state of the tide, and whether the wreckage was floating or bumping or high and dry, are points which must be carefully checked in the Report on W.R. 5, 7 and 11.

When a casualty occurs to a British ship at home or abroad, or to a foreign ship within British jurisdiction, the Master must report to the Receiver of Wreck at his first port. If the Customs Officer of that port does not hold an appointment as Receiver of Wreck, he cannot take a deposition on W.R.2, but he is generally empowered to hold a preliminary inquiry into the casualty, using form INQ.1 for the purpose. As a general rule, however, Preventive Officers-in-Charge are also Receivers of Wreck, and, as such, they can take preliminary inquiries or depositions upon casualties to shipping, according to the circumstances of the case. When the casualty occurs at a place where there is no Officer legally empowered to make or Emicuary inquiry or take depositions, and it is likely that the witnesses may leave before the arrival of such an officer, the Coastguard or Coast Preventive Man on the spot should obtain as full a statement as possible on form W.R.1, and forward it to the Receiver for the district. The names and

addresses of the important witnesses should be obtained so that they can be called upon for further evidence, if necessary.

In every case of serious loss or apprehended loss of property by shipping casualties, apart from vessels in distress, or whenever questions of importance arise relating to dangers of navigation or seaworthiness of ships, a deposition on oath must be taken on form INQ. 1. Serious collisions, strandings, and heavy sea damage may be regarded as coming within the scope requiring a preliminary inquiry on form INQ. 1. The evidence of material witnesses to the casualty must be obtained and recorded, and if any witness refuses to give evidence, the officer holding the inquiry is empowered to serve a form of summons (INQ. 2) upon him. The deposition on form INQ. 1 should be forwarded to the Mercantile Marine Department of the Board of Trade in original. Copies should not be sent to Lloyd's, and application for copies should be referred to the Board of Trade.

When a "ship in distress" is reported, a deposition on form WR.2 must be taken, and a charge of one pound made for every deposition. The broad definition of "ship in distress" is when she is imminently endangered and in need of assistance, or is wrecked. Depositions on form WR.2 can only be taken by a Receiver of Wreck holding a Commission as such. The examination must be conducted on oath, and the deponent is usually the Master or most important witness of survivors. The original WR.2 is retained by the Receiver, and the other copies forwarded to the Mercantile Marine Department of the Board of Trade, and to Lloyd's. On the day that the deposition is made, the local agent to Lloyd's calls and obtains a report of the deposition on form WR.52, for which he is charged threepence. Copies of depositions may be sold to persons interested in them at a charge of three shillings and sixpence per copy not exceeding two hundred and fifty words, and five shillings per copy of over two hundred and fifty words. A receipt on form F.24 is issued for each amount, and the money brought to account in SCHEDULE 13. The fees received, and chargeable against the wreck, if any, are entered in the Wreck Report Book.

A report on form WR.1 is to be forwarded to the Board of Trade for every shipping casualty. Form WR. is extended in the form of WR.1 (a) to WR.1 (h) to meet every kind of casualty, and the relative form, such as WR.1 (f) for a stranding, must be used. Whenever a vessel stranded or sunk is a danger to navigation, the fact, giving the exact position of the vessel, must be reported to the Harbour Authority concerned. If the place is outside the jurisdiction of a Harbour Authority, the fact must be reported to the General Lighthouse Authority for that part of the coast. In both cases the facts are to be reported to the Board of Trade.

A HOLIDAY ON THE SAHARA

By PATRICIA LINDEN.

Readers of "The Customs Journal" may be interested to see an account of a holiday which a party of Civil Servants have just spent in Algeria. The party, which numbered twenty, was arranged by Mr. Roy Clarke, of H.M. Office of Works. After a rapid run through France and a most pleasant trip across the Mediterranean, we sighted the coast of Africa in the evening of the third day. As we ran on deck the ship was gliding into the little harbour of Philippeville, a most picturesque town with tiny white houses dotted here and there among the trees on the hillside. After dinner, some of us went for a stroll, and it was then that we first realised that we were indeed in Africa. The indescribable balminess of the air produced in one a feeling of complete repose. The next day we were up with the lark, and took an early train to Constantine. This proved a most interesting run through a fertile region of vine and olive groves, orange and lemon plantations all heavy with fruit. Constantine is a natural fortress standing on an enormous rock, and surrounded by a profound chasm 180 feet deep, called the Gorge du Rhummel.

We explored the depths of this gorge, which is one of the finest sights imaginable. In the days before the French occupation, an ill-tempered or unfaithful wife of the Turkish Bey would be placed in a sack—together with a cat—and hurled from the highest point of the precipice to the rocks beneath. The cat was perhaps symbolic of the shrew even in those days.

Constantine to Biskra—a hundred and fifty miles—was done by motor charabanc. On the way to Biskra we stopped at El Kantara, a cleft in the Aures Mountains. Nothing could surpass in scenic beauty this green oasis nestling at the feet of gigantic precipices. Moorish poets have sung through the centuries of the glory of El Kantara, the Golden Gate of the Sahara. Then came Biskra, where we spent four days of pure enchantment. Our first excursion was a journey of twelve kilometres by camel into the sand dunes of the desert. It was wonderful to feel the sand of the great Sahara actually under our feet, and to gaze afar over the rolling dunes. One had often dreamed of such a scene, but now here it was in reality, and surpassing anything we had imagined. Unfortunately space will not permit of more than these few notes on a truly wonderful holiday.

I understand Mr. Clarke is forming another party to visit Algeria at Easter, and if any readers would like an ideal holiday amid the glories of African sunshine and the colours of Oriental life, I would recommend them to join.

LANDING AND SHIPPING DUTIES.

By "O'HAGEN."

THE failure to recognise the value of the Preventive Staff in the sphere of revenue protection is a matter that is causing grave concern throughout our own particular department. That the valuable experience which is an asset of the Preventive Staff should be so ignored as to place untrained men in positions in the Landing Staff, when the necessary experience is ready to hand in our own Staff, is a matter that has brought about a situation amounting to consternation. It is difficult to realise how it comes about that if these positions are to be filled from outside the Landing Staff, why they are not regarded as the natural outlet for men who have been trained for many years in the art—for art it surely is—of the examination of importations of various goods into the country. The Preventive Officer, with the accumulated knowledge gained by the wide scope of his duties, is a man eminently fitted for the duties recently given to clerical officers who have all their experience to gain. He has for many years mixed with people of all ranks of life—the merchant and his agent, the traveller, and the seafarer. He is alive to a host of artifices designed to evade the laws of the country, and he is in a unique position of being able to circumvent numberless attempts to rob the country of her just dues.

The storm of indignation that has been aroused is not confined to any one port, for in all quarters one hears this particular subject being discussed to the exclusion of all others. If the clerical officer is worth the salary that he is being paid for his new duties, how much more valuable are the services of the officer whose official life has been spent in building up an experience which is invaluable to the State and who, above all others, would naturally expect to be chosen for duties for which he is peculiarly fitted. It would certainly seem to appear that the authorities are far from aware of the value of the Preventive Staff, and that they can have a very incomplete conception of what the Staff actually performs, or is capable of performing. Certain it is, however, that what is officially styled the Water-guard is the only school in which the experience necessary for the performance of Landing and Shipping duties can be acquired.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS.

ELECTION OF COUNCILLORS.

Members in the London, Liverpool, South Wales and Hull Areas are hereby informed that the closing date for the receipt of ballot papers has been extended to the 21st of January, 1928.

I trust, therefore, that members who have not yet voted will forward the same before the above date. Ballot papers may be sent direct to Beer Lane or to the District Officer. J. T. SUTTON.

CIVIL SERVICE CONFEDERATION.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING.

A meeting of the Executive Committee of the Civil Service Confederation was held on Monday, 19th December, 1927, at Caxton Hall, Westminster. Mr. W. H. James presided over an attendance of 23.

It was reported that an application to the War Office for a deputation to discuss the question of the representation on the Administrative Departmental Council of the Viewers' Association had been refused. The General Purposes Committee of the Confederation is to further consider the matter.

In connection with the forthcoming Conference of the International Federation of Civil Servants and Teachers it was decided not to send representatives from the Confederation on this occasion.

As the whole question of deductions from salary was stated to be under consideration by the Official Side of the National Council, the following resolution will be sent to the Staff Side to be embodied in their claim:—

That efforts be made on the National Whitley Council to secure the inclusion among the objects permitted for deductions from official salary the cost of season tickets for use by staffs of Departments.

The following resolution is also being remitted to the National Staff Side for action:—

That steps be taken to secure for Civil Servants returning home from posts abroad, who have contracted tropical diseases during service abroad, free medical, and, where necessary, specialist treatment for such diseases.

A recent interview between Confederation representatives and the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies in relation to the position of various constituent organisations under the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act was reported. It was agreed to discharge the Special Committee which had dealt with this matter.

Reports were made to the Executive on various matters under consideration by the National Whitley Council.

Regarding the Higher Grades Committee, it was stated that there was some prospect of the difficulties of Staff Side representative capacity being overcome.

A report from the Joint General Purposes Committee of the National Council dealt with Cost-of-living Bonus, Medical Facilities—Officers Serving Abroad, Time Off in Lieu of Overtime, Medical Test for Temporary Officers on Engagement, and Officers Travelling on Official Business in Public Vehicles.

The Standing Joint Committee Report covered Lateral Transfers, Duties Alloted to Typing Grades, Superintendents of Typists—Overtime Payment, Gratuities to Officers on Higher Duties, Efficiency Bar, and Transfers from Higher to Lower Scales and vice versa.

Other matters reported on were Hours of Attendance, Substitution Pay, and Attendance of Government Representatives on the National Council. Regarding Temporary Staffs, a proposal had been made by the Staff Side for a Joint Committee to examine the proposals of the Temporary Staffs Alliance. The Official Side had agreed regarding the desirability of avoiding discharges as far as possible.

The main terms of the agreement on time off in lieu of overtime are to be circulated to constituent organisations. Also the views of Ministry of Labour Staff Associations are to be sought on the question of part time labour, in view of a proposal to withdraw it from the All-service Programme.

It was also stated that the question of Increases on Promotion was to be considered on its merits by the Official Side.

With reference to Arbitration (Revised Rules of Procedure) it was reported that various amendments had been agreed by the Staff Side, and that the Industrial Court had been requested to receive a deputation.

A report was also made as to action taken on the following matters:—Appointments conditional upon professional or specialised qualifications, Civil Servants engaging in private occupations, Payment of salary to Civil Servants suspended from duty, Publicity, and the setting up of Joint Committees for writing assistants and typists.

No action on the question of Civil Rights will be taken until the reassembly of Parliament.

SPORT AND SOCIAL.

PRESIDENT FOR THE CHESS CLUB.

THE INSPECTOR GENERAL.

Chess has obtained a firm hold among the members of the Preventive Staff, and a number of officers are regularly engaged in correspondence and over-board games, as reported in these columns from time to time.

Mr. Egan, who is keenly interested in the Club, and who recently gave a silver cup to be competed for amongst the members, has approached Mr. Thompson, the Inspector General, on the subject of the Presidency of the Club, with the result that Mr. Thompson has readily consented to become the first President.

Needless to say, this honour from the head of our section of the Service is greatly appreciated, and it is a notable fact that many officers unconnected with the Chess Club have registered their approbation of the I.G.W.'s action. We hope to see the Club still further succeed under his presidency.

KENT CORRESPONDENCE MATCH.

PREVENTIVE STAFF TEAM RESULTS.

In this match our team "A" are matched against three of Kent's Vice-Presidents, and so far the only finished game in this team is a win for us, Professor R. W. Genese, M.A., resigning to Mr. Smallwood, London, at the 36th move. We have no news of the first three boards to hand, but the last board in team "A" stands a pawn down in 25 moves with positions equal. We hear that Mr. Boodle's opponent had succeeded in seven rounds of the Kent County Cup.

In team "B" Mr. Sandford resigned at the 32nd move. He was matched against a much older player who played at board No. 2 in a 50-board match in 1925/6 against the Kent match conductor. The result was a draw. The Kent M.C. was County Champion in 1906 and 1923.

Mr. Mathews resigned to his opponent in 20 or 25 moves. Mr. Kidman is still in the contest, his opponent being a Civil Servant who won the prize for the best individual score in Section 1 of the Civil Service and Municipal League of the Civil Service Chess Association, 1926/7. Mr. O. M. Williams is still contesting, and Mr. Dudley won his game in ten moves.

B.G.F. COUNTY AND DISTRICT CORRESPONDENCE CHAMPIONSHIP.

Our Opponents.

White: Mr. A. Hardie, Customs Waterguard C.C., Kent.
Black: Capt. Rose, Teignmouth C.C., Devon.
White: Mr. F. G. Boodle, Customs Waterguard C.C., Kent.
Black: Mr. H. Gluyas, Weston-super-Mare C.C., Somerset. Play commenced on January 2nd.

LONDON.

Another fine dance, organised by the Committee of the South Side Sports Club, was enjoyed by a large gathering at the New Cross Palais on the evening of January 4th. The President, Mr. C. E. Egan, was present, and during the evening took the opportunity of voicing the gratitude of the Club members to the management, the band and the M.C. for their unfailing hearty co-operation in making the social evenings such an unqualified success.

Mr. and Mrs. Fleet were also present, and Mrs. Fleet, who presented the prizes (which were on this occasion awarded to the holders of certain numbers on the cloak-room tickets), expressed her delight at being able to be present so often at the South Side social evenings.

Solution to Problem No. 6.

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|----------|--------------|
| 1. ——— | 1. Q—R8+ |
| 2. B—Kt1 | 2. Q×B at R1 |

CUP CONTEST.

Section 1.

Round 7.—Mr. Thomson, Bangor, beat Mr. E. W. Kidman, Liverpool; Mr. A. Hardie, Ayr, beat Mr. R. E. Dudley, London; Mr. S. W. H. Hargrove, Eastham, beat Mr. F. G. Boodle, Dover.

Section 2.

Round 3.—Mr. H. Ellis, Newport, beat Mr. J. Terry, Liverpool.

Round 6.—Mr. L. E. Knight, Sharpness, beat Mr. E. T. Sandford, Newport. (Adjudicated.)

Round 7.—Mr. S. H. Mathews, Newport, beat Mr. E. T. Sandford, Newport.

NOTE.—Players are reminded that the season ends 31 3 28, when all games should be sent for adjudication, thus ALL outstanding games should commence immediately, as games not commenced or proceeded more than twelve moves become void and the point at issue forfeited. The Committee wish all members "A Happy and Healthy New Year," and success to those C.W.C.C. members sitting at the next examination for P.O. ship.

THE UNKNOWN.

It happened that Mr. Jones received a query from the A.G. regarding the method of calculating the extra hour added for split attendance, and Jones was requested to repay one hour's overtime. Jones stuck to his views and saw the A.G. personally.

"There are hundreds of ways of making money," said the A.G.

"Yes," said Jones, "but only one honest way."

"What's that?" queried the O.T. reducer.

"Ah!" said Jones. "I thought you wouldn't know that."

DISTRIBUTION OF THE "CUSTOMS JOURNAL."

A new contract has been entered into for the printing of the "Customs Journal," commencing with this issue. Should any irregularity occur in distribution, subscribers are asked to communicate IMMEDIATELY with Mr. Peake. By so doing it will be possible to rectify any possible errors at the earliest possible moment.

Correspondence

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 V.E.S. AND THE EXAMINATION.

Sir, Mr. Crooks seems quite cross with Mr. Sutton, and to the extent of introducing a particular port into his recent letter in connection with the above subject, Mr. Sutton was most indiscreet. I therefore agree with Mr. Crooks so far. An Association official of any experience should have learnt to avoid the "sin" of trouncing any particular port or district for apathy. Let him generalise as much as he likes it is often very salutary—but to inferentially "black list" any section in the same body is bad policy. It has a "back-stiffening" effect sometimes. Mr. Crooks, as D.S. for Hull, should have dealt with this point, and left it. But the ire of Mr. Crooks extends beyond the one indiscretion of Mr. Sutton. I think Mr. Sutton made a mistake, doubtless with the best intentions, but Mr. Crooks throws discretion to the winds altogether. He brings the V.E.S., the P.S.A., and even the examiners, into it!

In the first place, I must state that the P.S.A. does not "run" the V.E.S., but the P.S.A. saw the distinct advantages of such an innovation. When it was sanctioned by the P.S.A. it was expected that it would receive the support of all, particularly of the P.S.A. officials. Mr. Crooks admits that it met with "distinct approval," yet, under the guise of having a shot at Mr. Sutton, he tries to knock a few rivets out of the V.E.S. bulkheads without any apparent motive or invitation.

"It really makes one wonder how the present-day P.O. passed his examination." These words are from Mr. Crooks' letter. Very well. What the V.E.S. is designed for is to prevent so many failing to pass the examination. The fact that a certain percentage qualified (and not all self-taught) is absolutely no reason why the Association should not foster a scheme which would mean a higher percentage of successes, and a higher standard of Departmental knowledge. And, for reasons outlined in my letter on the subject in last issue, such a scheme is absolutely necessary.

It is realised that the average A.P.O. is not in a position to gain a thorough knowledge of Departmental requirements, or to interpret correctly all the intricacies of the Regulations, without some little assistance. Some are, of course, very clever, whilst others have the advantage of the right environment and contact. But I refer to the average. The Unattached Officer in the sister Department commences his official life with the books at his elbow, and the work is displayed before him. A good portion of time is taken in officially teaching him. He assumes practical work in carrying out the Regulations early in his service, and his responsibilities commence early—in fact, he is gradually worked into them. The A.P.O. has no such advantage. He assumes his responsibilities only when he qualifies for, and is appointed, P.O. Then he is dumped in amongst it. An occasional query or an official "wiggling" may perhaps increase the

size of his hump of wisdom, but official time must certainly not be wasted on his training. So perhaps, in the circumstances, it is no wonder that so many do not pass the examination.

In the furtherance of the V.E.S. I can see no vestige of the "coercion" Mr. Crooks refers to. (It may have been to the personal gain of many who have failed if they could have been coerced into study!) The man who strives alone, or by private tuition, to reach the goal is certainly to be applauded, but the Vocational Educational Scheme is a concession (perhaps this has been misinterpreted "coercion") to the A.P.O. which supplies a long-felt want, and, despite all harping criticism, is receiving the support of those who have their own interests, and the best interests of the Department, at heart. The fact that enquiries have even been received from some Clerical Officers as to the possibility of being allowed to take courses, shows the value of the Scheme and, incidentally, the importance of Waterguard work.—Yours, etc.,

W. M. SHEENAN.

FAILED A.P.O.s.

Sir,—With reference to the quarterly District Meeting held in Glasgow, as reported by you in December, I am surprised at the attitude adopted by the majority of the members at that meeting when the proposal was carried to allow failed A.P.O.s a third chance, and that successful candidates of that class be given charge of small ports. Had it been stated that they be given charge of ports where A.P.O.s are now in charge I would agree; but otherwise, no. I consider that it requires proved intelligence to carry on successfully at an in-charge port. This opinion is formed from actual experience at such places. When the large port man is in doubt or difficulty he may consult a brother officer or an immediate superior, but no such opportunity is given to the small port man. Therefore, if failed A.P.O.s are ever given a third chance, I would advocate that the successful candidates be appointed to the large ports.—Yours, etc.,

"W.B."

Editors Notes and Comments

The altered appearance of the "Customs Journal" with this issue is the outcome of negotiations during the latter part of last year by the Executive Committee and the Journal Sub-Committee. A new contract has been entered into which will effect a material saving in the cost of production. This important step in placing this publication on an enhanced economical footing will meet with the general approbation of the membership of the P.S.A., and we venture to predict that it will be reflected in a much more keen co-operation on the part of districts and members in the discussion of Service topics, etc., through these columns.

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unnecessary to wait until the last moment before posting articles and correspondence. All matter intended for insertion should be sent direct to the Editor at the address named elsewhere in this and all issues, and it is important that manuscript should contain the writing on one side of the paper only.

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We have drawn attention to the fact that the change-over may possibly affect the distribution on this occasion. District Secretaries and others responsible for local distribution should immediately notify Mr. Peake, the "Customs Journal" Secretary, of any mistake, or alteration necessary, in the despatch of the Journal, in order that further supplies may be correctly sent out.

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