

The Customs Journal.

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General Secretary's Notes.

Communications relative to this column should be addressed to the General Secretary, 13 Richardson St., Southdown Road, Liverpool.

The following correspondence has been addressed to the Board:—

10th June, 1919.

Honourable Sirs,

Since our communication of the 24th ultimo (E. 42) our Executive Committee have been furnished with a copy of a further ruling by the A.C.G. governing points of the Arbitration Agreement, contained in G.O. 32/1919, a copy of which is enclosed herewith.

We are desired by our Executive Committee to say that this ruling draws a distinction between two schemes of attendance, as far as they are affected by Heading 5 of the Agreement, where no distinction in fact exists.

At the interview between the Deputy-Chairman and our representative on the 26th February last, when the question of the four hours minimum was discussed, the Deputy-Chairman stated that the concession would be brought into operation by substituting the relative word "three" in G.O. 26/1913 by the word "four." This statement was made following an understanding that the four hours minimum would cover any attendance, and its practical effect is to include any appearance for duty under any scheme of attendance. Consequently Heading 5 of the Agreement is not distinct and separate from, but complimentary to Heading 6, and the effect of the two awards in relation to a scheme of three hours' tidal attendance should be as follows:—

First attendance of 3 hours—4 hours (Heading 5).

Second attendance of 3 hours—3 hours plus 1 (Heading 6).

We are desired by our Executive Committee to respectfully request that the ruling of the A.C.G. shall be cancelled, and substituted by an interpretation on the lines indicated in this letter.

Enclosure.

OVERTIME PAY, G.O. 32/1919.

Headings 5 and 6 of the Agreement are separate awards applicable to one or other of two distinct schemes of attendance. The two headings do not apply to a particular man on one day.

Heading 5 applies to officials who have a fixed scheme of attendance of 7 or 8 hours' continuous duty in any day. The award is applicable when, in addition to this spell, the officer is called out specially for a further attendance.

Heading 6 applies to officers who are conditioned to give their normal attendance in two parts—e.g., 4 or 3 hours on each tide. Thus a P.M. on daily tidal duty in two spells of 3 hours each spell would be entitled to count 3 hours for first spell and 3 plus 1 for the second. (Note: Under a previous decision the hour for split attendance is to be taken as the hour following the second spell.)

The 4 hours minimum for second attendance will apply to an occasional second attendance (as distinct from a regular second attendance in the case of tidal duty) by an officer who also gives a normal spell of 8 hours' duty on that Sunday or Public Holiday. Except as above, there is no one hour extra for second attendances as such.

The hour extra for split attendance is applicable on Sundays where the two attendances are given in the case of a

fixed scheme (as distinct from two casual attendances for arrivals or on Merchant's request)—i.e., two tidal attendances.

10th June, 1919.

Hon. Sirs,

With reference to Paragraph 7 of G.O. 32/19, it has been represented to our E.C. that officers at small ports feel some hesitation in surrendering the commuted allowances in favour of the new overtime rates and conditions, owing to the possibility that the schemes of attendance may at some future time be altered so as to reduce the overtime pay to a point below the amount of the present commuted allowances.

We are desired by our E.C. to suggest that, in fairness to those who elect to come under the ordinary overtime conditions because the existing schemes of attendance make them more advantageous, the officers concerned should be guaranteed the continuance of those schemes of attendance, or that they will not be altered to their pecuniary detriment.

We are, etc.,

(Signed) J. HALL, President,
A. EDWARD HOWELL, Gen. Sec.

The National Provisional Joint Committee on the application of the Whitley Report to the Civil Service, which was appointed as a result of the National Conference on the 8th April, presented their Report on the 28th ultimo. It has been accepted by the War Cabinet, and is now in the hands of the Service Associations.

The new Committee have succeeded in breathing the essential spirit of Whitleyism into the inanimate body of the original scheme. The changes are few but vital, and make all the difference in the world between sham and real Whitley Councils.

The Report contemplates (1) A National Council; (2) Departmental Councils; and (3) District (or Office) Committees. The National Council, broadly speaking, will deal with general principles, the Departmental Councils with the application of those principles, and the District Committees with matters of detail.

The National Council will comprise 54 persons—27 from each side, with a chairman from the official side and a vice-chairman from the staff side, and two secretaries from each side.

Decisions shall be arrived at by agreement, shall be signed by the chairman and vice-chairman, shall be reported to the Cabinet, and thereupon shall become operative.

After making the necessary changes this applies to the Departmental Councils, except that the official side need not be equal in numbers to the staff side.

The recommendation regarding decisions represents one of the vital changes secured by the new Committee. In the original Report the Treasury (nationally) and the Minister or Head of Department (departmentally) could veto the decisions of the Councils.

Under the original Report promotion and discipline were subjects expressly excepted from the purview of the Councils; but now the National Council will deal with the underlying principles, while the Departmental Councils have power to discuss individual cases of promotion or discipline.

Each side of the Council will be responsible for its own expenses, common expenses being defrayed in equal proportion. Special leave, with pay, will be given to Civil Servants who are members of the staff side of the Councils.

The practical effect of the Report is to shift the control of the Civil Service, and its constituent elements, from the Treasury, the Minister, or Departmental Heads, and Local Heads, to the Whitley Councils or Committees.

If the implications involved are properly understood, the magnitude of the change now on the eve of being effected will be realised.

The Minister of Labour has convened the adjourned conference of representatives of the Government and of Civil Service Associations to be held at the Carlton Hall, Westminster, at 10.30 a.m. on the 3rd July, when the Report will be presented and formally accepted. The Chancellor of the Exchequer will take the