

The Professional Division offered peculiar difficulties. The best evidence obtained outside the Public Service was agreed on the fact that the salary of a professional officer should depend entirely on the ability of the officer himself. It is precisely here that classification in its ordinary sense is liable to fail, and will assuredly fail, unless promotions are made entirely on merit. In the case of professional officers, it is imperative that the ablest men should be selected for any vacancy that may occur irrespective of any other consideration than merit and fitness. While a moderate latitude may be allowed in this respect in the Clerical Division, it would be fatal to good administration to consider the length of service when dealing with professional officers. During their examination of officers the Commissioners found that there was too great a tendency to put forward the idea that positions should be rigidly classified, the result of which might often be that an officer of indifferent ability would rise to the maximum of the position. While in the case of many professional officers there has been no particular difficulty in fixing a reasonable maximum, it should be understood that any maximum shown against those more highly placed is liable to change according to the ability of the officer holding the position.

As regards proper salaries to be paid to professional officers, it was possible to make a more or less exact comparison in some cases with the salaries drawn by professional men outside the Service. As a rule the latter were found to vary considerably. Professional officers of the Public Service naturally called attention to the highest salaries drawn in their profession outside the Service, but the Commissioners had to consider other phases of the question. A good deal of well-intentioned advice has been given by people outside the Public Service, generally to the effect that higher salaries should be paid to professional men than is at present done; but it is quite obvious that if a man of experience is drawing a stated salary from a large private company and offers his services to the Government for the same salary, a reasonable rate for the position is at once ascertained. A distinction should, moreover, be drawn between the case of men who have acquired their professional education and University degrees at heavy expense—such, for example, as medical practitioners—and the case of professional men for whom Government has borne the entire cost of training. In the one case the cost of education is often about £1,000, while no fees are earned before twenty-four or twenty-five years of age. In the case of professional officers trained by Government, lads commence at the age of sixteen or seventeen and immediately draw a salary sufficient to keep them until they pass their examinations. It is stated that many of such lads, whose education has cost the country a considerable sum of money, have drifted away soon after obtaining the hall-mark of their profession, with the result that the cost of their education has been completely lost. This is said to have been the result of want of encouragement. As it is the aim of the Commissioners to obviate the loss of young officers of the kind, a special salary consideration has been provided for all who pass the necessary professional examinations. The method of recruiting for the Professional Division does not appear to have been satisfactory in the past. This is having attention.

As there is no distinction in the Act between professional officers and officers who may be described as “experts,” the latter have been placed in special classes in the General Division, which comprises all officers who are not required to pass the entrance examination or to show professional qualifications.

As the General Division necessarily contains all tradesmen and officers filling occupations which cannot be described as professional or clerical, it is comprised of officers of a great variety of occupations. Expert officers have been graded according to the value of their work. The classifying of tradesmen and other officers has given the Commissioners much thought. Many lower-paid officers were found to be working for less than a proper minimum wage, and the first care has been to place these officers on a reasonable scale. While it has been necessary to a certain extent to consider existing award rates, the Commissioners have deemed it their duty to interpret awards in the same manner in which a liberal employer of labour would do. When it is added that all officers receive holidays greatly in excess of those provided in awards on full pay, and that reasonable absence on account of sickness does not entail loss of pay, besides the permanency of their positions and