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BALTIMORE, MD.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
LIGHTHOUSE SERVICE

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OFFICE OF INSPECTOR, 5TH DISTRICT
BALTIMORE, MD.

HDK--REOM.

Disciplinary action, leave of absence, etc., keepers.

July 7, 1916

Commissioner of Lighthouses, Washington, D.C.

Referring to the matter of charges against the keeper and assistant keeper of Windmill Point Light Station, Va., I have to state that this Office is making a determined effort to bring about a strict enforcement of the provisions of the regulations as to leave of absence and if the recommendations of this Office are supported by the Bureau and the Department in this case, it is recommended that notation of this disciplinary action be published in the bulletin for its exemplary effect on other keepers.

Before taking this radical course every means of warning and explanation has been used in an endeavor to correct this trouble, which is believed to exist at a considerable number of stations though not to the extent of this paricular case. I have heretofore refrained from bringing charges against keepers in the hope that before taking such measures for the enforcement of the present regulations the Bureau might see fit to modify in slight degree, at least so far as this District is concerned, paragraph 469 of the Regulations, sub-paragraph 5, which provides that at two-keeper stations neither keeper shall be absent more than 4 days without providing a substitute at his own expense. As I have heretofore stated, both by letter and at the last annual conference, I am fully persuaded that this provision of the regulations

See my memo. on sheet 2
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works harm rather than good to the efficiency of the service in this District and that the limit of 4 days should, in justice to the keepers and for the best interests of the service, be extended to 6 days. My reasons for taking this position have already been set forth to the Bureau.* Since this subject came up for discussion at the last annual conference I have obtained from those inspectors who objected to this amendment of the regulations a list of the stations in their respective districts which were affected by this paragraph and since considering the conditions I am more than ever persuaded that the objections of these districts to a modification of this paragraph should not be permitted to militate against a change for this district. My recommendation is therefore renewed that paragraph 469, sub-paragraph 5 of the regulations be amended to read "at stations where two keepers are authorized neither keeper shall be absent more than 6 days without providing at his own expense a substitute satisfactory to the inspector."

That no untoward results are to be feared from approval of such a recommendation is I think sufficiently guaranteed by the fact that for years prior to promulgation of the present regulations it was unquestionably the practice at very many stations, I might say nearly all stations of this character in this district, for only one keeper to be on duty at one time and that as soon as one came it was the practice for the other to go ashore and I do not know that this practice resulted in any demoralization of the service. Under the present conditions of cost of living the requirement that

* NOTE. See par 47, page 46, of minutes conference c 7 l insprs, in wh kings plan was to allow 6 days absence, instead of the 4 days allowed by regs, without having a substitute. Kings plan not approved by majority of inpprs.

Noted VHD 2/9/15

Findings of Bu: No change to be made TSC 7/14/15 7/14

these employees furnish substitute whenever they leave the station for more than 4 days is in my opinion a distinct injustice and discrimination against this class of keepers. Outside of the question of expense of hiring a substitute the difficulty of getting one is such that at times the service upon this class of lighthouse bears a close resemblance to incarceration. Many of these keepers are a day or more sail from home even in fine weather.

There are so many difficult conditions in the administration of the lighthouse service at the best, many of which are imposed by statutory limit, that I am unwilling to let this question drop without this one further attempt to secure what I consider only a fair treatment of this class of employees by slight modification of existing regulations which is in the discretion of the Department and which I am so thoroughly satisfied should be made for the best interests of the service.

H. D. King.

Lighthouse Inspector.