

ONE DAY OFF IN FIVE TO FIREMEN

System Recommended as an Experiment by Acting Mayor Whelton.

A recommendation of vital importance to the firemen of the city of Boston, to allow them one day off in five, was issued by Acting Mayor Daniel A. Whelton last evening to the fire commissioner, the recommendation contemplating that the experiment extend from Nov 8 for six months, and if it proves a success that the new measure be made permanent.

The recommendation is made at this time, according to the acting mayor, because at present the full complement of men is on duty and that less expense will be caused now than if made at the time when the force is depleted by vacations.

Neither Acting Mayor Whelton nor Commissioner Benjamin W. Wells would discuss the order, the former having expressed his intention in the recommendation and the latter saying that he had not as yet received the communication from Mr Whelton and that it would be discourteous to the latter to discuss the matter intelligently.

At present there are employed in the Boston fire department about 760 men, and under the present system a man is given one day off in eight, or about 93 men at a time. Under the one-day-in-five system 150 men will be absent at all times and hence will involve a considerable addition to the force. But during the time that vacations are on, the six months preceding Nov 8, this number must be largely augmented to provide a sufficient working force.

The question raised by the recommendation is by no means a new one. In substance, it is the same as an ordinance passed by the city council in June, 1904, and subsequently vetoed by Mayor Collins on the ground that the city could not stand the extra expense which would come from the employment of 70 extra men.

Mayor Collins, in that veto message, said that the additional cost to the city

the first year would be \$56,700, on the second year \$66,500, on the third year \$73,500, on the fourth year \$80,500, and on the fifth year \$84,000.

The order was passed by the city council June 5, 1904, and was vetoed June 16. Alderman Kneeland raised the point that as the mayor had not vetoed the order within the usual 10 days' limit the order was in force. The corporation counsel sustained the position of the mayor on the ground that the mayor's signature was necessary before the order could become operative.

The matter was afterward carried to the courts, where the mayor was again sustained in his veto.

Another alternative to the present suggestion is that of having a two-platoon system, whereby each man has 12 hours each day off. This has its disadvantages from the nature of the fireman's work, and a man is likely to be called out after coming on duty without sufficient rest. The experiment of a two-platoon system was tried in one battalion in New York, and according to Commissioner Croker of that city proved a failure.

In support of the measure it is urged that at present the fireman has very little time for his family.

The acting mayor's communication to the fire commissioner follows:

"Benjamin W. Wells, Esq, Fire Commissioner, Boston, Mass:

"Dear Sir—In view of the efficient and courageous manner in which the officers and men in the fire department have discharged their duties in the past, I respectfully recommend that they be given one day's leave of absence in every five for the six months commencing Nov 8, 1905, that being the period when the full complement of men are on duty.

"If, at the expiration of that time, it is found that the experiment has improved the efficiency of the department, arrangements can then be made to make it a permanent rule. Respectfully,

"Daniel A. Whelton,
Acting Mayor.

"Nov 6, 1905."