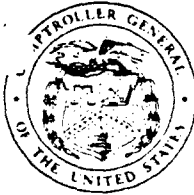


DECISION

THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20548

60413

FILE: B-183789

DATE: JAN 23 1976

MATTER OF:

Gregory J. Cavanagh - Miscellaneous Expense Allowance

~~099315~~
099209

DIGEST:

1. Fee incurred for leveling and adjusting of grandfather clock necessary for clock to operate properly incident to transfer of official duty station, is allowable miscellaneous expense under FPMR 101-7, para. 2-3.1b.
2. Claim incident to transfer for reimbursement of cost of postage stamps used to notify periodical publishers and creditors of change of address is not allowable because it is considered to have been an expense incurred for reasons of personal taste or preference under FPMR 101-7, para. 2-3.1c.

This decision concerns the propriety of paying two items claimed for reimbursement by Mr. Gregory J. Cavanagh incident to his transfer of official duty station: (1) clock expert's fee for leveling and adjusting grandfather clock (\$15); and (2) 38 postage stamps at 10 cent each needed to notify magazines, other periodicals, and credit accounts of change of address.

Mr. Cavanagh, an employee of the Energy Research and Development Administration, was transferred from Evergreen, Colorado, to Germantown, Maryland. One item of household goods shipped by Mr. Cavanagh was a grandfather clock that Mr. Cavanagh reports required adjusting and leveling after being placed in its new location in order to put the clock into operation. It is reported that this procedure is necessary to allow the clock to run properly and keep accurate time because of the sensitivity of the clock's devices. Mr. Cavanagh stresses that the clock was disassembled and reassembled properly by the movers and that the need for adjusting and leveling was totally unrelated to anything movers did or could have done. Rather, the procedure is inherently necessary whenever such a clock is moved from one position to another because no two locations are exactly alike and the adjusting and leveling is necessary to make the clock compatible with any new location.

Expenses which are payable under the miscellaneous expense allowance provided for by the Federal Travel Regulations include "expenses that are common to living quarters, furnishings, household appliances, and to other general types of costs inherent in relocation of a place of residence" and for "connecting appliances, equipment, or utilities involved in relocation." Federal Travel Regulations (FPMR 101-7) para. 2-3.1b (May 1973). We believe that the fee paid comes within the intent of FTR para. 2-3.1b(1) (May 1973). See B-178228, June 5, 1973, in which we disallowed a claim for the cost of adjusting a television tuner but only because its purpose was "to improve the quality of the operation of the television itself /due to damage in transit/ rather than being for the purpose of installation." Therefore, the fee of \$15 for leveling and adjusting the clock may be allowed.

Expenses incurred for reasons of personal taste or preference and not required because of the move are not allowable. See FTR para. 2-3.1c (May 1973) and B-163650, March 26, 1968. Accordingly, the cost of the postage stamps is for disallowance as not falling within the purview of the regulations. On previous occasions we have been called upon to decide whether long distance telephone calls made in connection with the employee's relocation were reimbursable expenses. Our past decisions have primarily considered the purpose of the call and have allowed or disallowed the expense dependent upon whether the purpose of the call was for an item that would constitute an allowable expense. See B-171808, March 31, 1971, and B-163650, March 26, 1968. We believe that the postage stamp expense is analogous, and since the stamps were used to notify magazine publishers and creditors, which are not allowable expenses, that item is for disallowance.

Mr. Cavanagh has previously been paid \$452.50 for various miscellaneous expenses for which either paid bills or other acceptable evidence justifying the amounts claimed had been furnished the administrative office. The total amount now authorized in accordance with this decision is still within the limitation set forth in FTR para. 2-3.3(b) (May 1973) that the aggregate amount for miscellaneous expenses for an employee with an immediate family may not exceed his basic pay for 2 weeks.

The voucher which is returned herewith should be handled in accordance with the above.

R. F. Keller

Deputy, Comptroller General
of the United States