

services, such as cleaning of offices, chimney-sweeping, cartage, window-cleaning, scavenging, coals, firewood, maintenance of venetian blinds, and many others. These involve a certain degree of annual revision and preparation, and a considerable amount of account-keeping. An undesirable variety of practice as regards these miscellaneous services has grown up gradually, as the result of custom or the local views of various departments, and a general impression that so long as an arrangement was made it was not of much consequence whether it was on the lines of any general system. Confusion sometimes arises from these causes, and a change should certainly be made. But reorganization in this direction would be a prolonged and troublesome operation, and the end to be attained not commensurate with the time and attention requiring to be devoted to it, while so many other more important matters have had to be dealt with since taking charge of the department. The matter, however, will not be lost sight of.

ADDITIONS.

Some special points relating to additions to public buildings are assuming dimensions which will require dealing with immediately upon definite lines. They may be divided into three main classes.

The simplest is where the additions or extensive alterations are required to the public offices proper to provide necessary further accommodation in the interest of the public needs. These are almost invariably carried out to drawing and specification by contract, and are therefore previously well considered in regard to both planning, expense, and harmony as far as possible with the existing portion of the structure, but are sometimes of an extent which makes it doubtful whether it would not be wiser to erect a new building altogether. This point may not be decided by wisdom, but by the funds which may happen to be available.

The second arises chiefly in the case of post- and telegraph-offices and police-stations, and, occasionally, of caretakers' cottages and Courthouse adjuncts, gaol-warders' premises, &c., and is where the additions are not required to the public offices served by these officers, nor in any correct sense for the requirements of the public service at all, but to the attached, semi-detached, or detached living-quarters. These are certainly Government buildings, but are equally certainly not public buildings properly so called. As time goes on, the public servant occupying them, for whose requirements they were at first sufficient, and who may be, and very often is, a hard-working and reliable officer, finds his family increasing and is pinched for room, and, in a few years, not only discomfort but also decency demand further accommodation. These cases, if they were of rare occurrence, might reasonably be met by the State recognising the situation where the officers' merits deserve it, and providing the accommodation. But the applications are pouring in in alarming numbers from all parts of the country, and, although the heads of the departments concerned endeavour as far as possible by removals, transfers, and exchanges to places with larger quarters—in themselves no slight hardship if unaccompanied by promotion—to meet the most urgent cases, the opportunities of successfully overcoming the difficulty in this way are very few, and cause an embarrassment to the departments which is not coupled with any advantage to the public service.

This question will very soon have to be faced and a definite policy laid down—whether the State is to decline all liability in such cases, to aid the officer by subvention or grant under specified conditions of expenditure, or to call upon him to meet the demands of decency and health by erecting additional accommodation at his own cost. The first is the simplest, the second doubtfully a charge on the public service, and the third would be impracticable in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. There are on record of the departments and this office a very large number of these cases, with which it is found most difficult to deal in any satisfactory way.

The third class arises out of the one last stated. It not seldom happens that the exigencies of the case are such that some additional accommodation must be provided in some way or another. The officer concerned, after repeated applications, which cannot be met because available funds are required for more urgent and properly so-called services offers in despair to build rooms on himself if granted a certain allowance-in-aid. The result where the allowance is granted, which must nearly always be at hap-hazard as to result, is that some sort of cheap leanto is put up in bush-carpentering style, with the not improbable consequence of depreciating and disfiguring a public building. There is only one way out of this, and that is for the State, if it does give a grant-in-aid, to do so only on such conditions and with such liberality as will ensure the whole work on which it is to be expended being executed with due regard to durability, finish, and harmony.

RENTED BUILDINGS.

Although most of the public buildings are Crown property and upon Crown lands, there is, nevertheless, a considerable number of rented offices and quarters upon leased property. In some few cases, such as the old printing-office and Te Aro Police-station at Wellington, and the Central Police-station at Dunedin, the tenements are large and the ground occupied of some extent. In all these cases, of course, the Crown, although recognised as an excellent tenant, is charged a high rental, and complications are apt to arise and claims to be made, especially at expiry, with regard to these leases.

To acquire all these rented properties, and to retain them, or replace them with a better class of structure, would involve an expenditure for which funds have not been provided. But, apart from the fact that many of them are not suited to the needs of the public service, having been acquired perhaps long ago, or in the hurry of necessity, there are many other reasons why it is undesirable that public offices or the free quarters of public servants should be under rent to private persons; and this is a matter that should receive consideration with a view to a gradual extermination of such cases. In police-stations an effort is being made to reduce the rented quarters or offices.