

loyalty and efficiency of the officers of the Service, who have carried burdens far beyond those normally imposed on them. The sick-leave records of the Service will show that this burden has not been carried without taking its toll on the staff. Nevertheless, the duty of the Public Service is to provide service in one way or another to the community as a whole, and there is only one standard to be aimed at, and that is the greatest possible efficiency in the conduct of the affairs of State.

It is a duty imposed on the Commissioner by the provisions of the Public Service Act, 1912, that "as often as necessary to carry out the directions and provisions of the Act and to ensure the establishment and continuance of a proper standard of efficiency and economy in the Public Service, the Commissioner shall cause any Department to be inspected; and the Commissioner or an Assistant Commissioner shall investigate the character of the work performed by every officer therein, and the efficiency, economy, and general working of the Department both separately and in its relation to other Departments." This statutory task of the inspection of Departments has had to lapse to a considerable extent during the war years. It is intended that the inspection programme will be expanded considerably in the near future.

One factor militating against efficiency at the present time is the acute shortage of shorthand-typists and typists, particularly in the main centres. It is realized that this difficulty is one of general shortage of female labour and is not confined to the Public Service or to this Dominion. Whatever may be the cause of this situation, it is extremely difficult to suggest a remedy. There is no doubt that private concerns can bargain and offer more attractive conditions than the Public Service, where the effect of increasing the remuneration of one employee may result in the necessity to review several hundred cases.

PERSONAL REPORTS ON OFFICERS

Although personal reports on officers were obtained as at 31st March, 1945, it was found necessary to ask Departments for further reports on officers as at 31st December, 1945. Notwithstanding the short period that had elapsed since officers were previously reported on, the additional reports were required as an essential pre-requisite to the regrading. No alteration was made in the form of report, so that there would be a basis of comparison with previous reports.

Before reports are again asked for it is proposed to review the present form of report in the light of experience and suggestions that have been received in an endeavour to make improvements. Although the present system of personal reports on officers has been criticized, no better method has yet been produced for recording the relative merits of a staff of an organization of the size of the Public Service. In any organization where the promotion system is based on merit, periodic reports on officers are essential. The abolition of reporting, apart from other serious disadvantages, would endanger the merit system of promotion prescribed by the Public Service Amendment Act, 1927, which is, in our opinion, the only effective basis of selection of officers for advancement to higher positions. The form of the report and the methods of its completion will always be subject to review with the object of improvement. Such alterations will be undertaken from time to time as experience indicates.

HOUSING DIFFICULTIES

The acceptance of promotion throughout the Service is still being retarded through difficulties in obtaining housing accommodation. It is