

### OPERATION OF PUBLIC SERVICE ACT, 1912

The establishment of a Public Service Commission as from 1st November, 1946, affords a suitable opportunity to review briefly the operation of the Public Service Act, 1912. The ordinary routine of administration of the Public Service Act, 1912, may shortly be described as the procedure necessary to secure the efficient organization and economical staffing of the various State Departments, and includes such matters as promotions, transfers, retirements, the filling of vacancies, the classification of officers, the examination of candidates for appointment, inquiries involving disciplinary action, and investigations concerning details of departmental organization to ensure the economical and efficient administration of the Service as a whole. The fundamental principles underlying the Public Service Act, 1912, are—

- (a) The elimination of influence;
- (b) The affording of equal opportunities for advancement and providing for promotion not by seniority, but by merit and fitness;
- (c) The institution of a classification scheme; and
- (d) The promotion of efficient and economical administration.

In regard to the elimination of influence, the Royal Commission which was set up in 1912 and upon whose report the Public Service Act, 1912, was largely based, stated that one of the first duties of the new form of control should be to block all "back doors" of entrance to the Public Service. The Royal Commission considered that the characteristics of the Service should be—

- (1) Entry by competitive examination;
- (2) Probation before final admission;
- (3) Security of tenure during good behaviour after admission;
- (4) Promotion by merit; and
- (5) Pensions on retirement.

The wisdom of this recommendation is exemplified in the efficiency obtained in the Public Service under Commissioner control.

### CONTROL OF PUBLIC SERVICE FROM 1ST NOVEMBER, 1946

Mr. R. M. Campbell, who until recently was the Official Secretary to the New Zealand High Commissioner's Office in London, was appointed Chairman of the Commission. Associated with him as members of the Commission are Mr. G. T. Bolt, who was previously an Assistant Public Service Commissioner, and Mr. A. H. O'Keefe, who was nominated by the Public Service Association and who was formerly a President of that Association. The members of the Commission have been engaged in a general survey of the problems of the Public Service. Visits have been made to many towns outside Wellington, but it will take time to cover the whole of New Zealand. It is of importance that the Commission should have personal knowledge not only of Permanent Heads and senior officers in Wellington, but also of controlling officers and other senior officers outside Wellington.

### CONDITION AND EFFICIENCY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Section 15, Public Service Act, 1912, requires the Commission to report at least annually on the condition and efficiency of the Public Service. It cannot be claimed that the efficiency of the Service has been maintained at the pre-war standard. Shortage of office accommodation, shortage of staff (especially of fully trained staff), and the difficulty of transferring officers from one place to another because of housing and board and lodging problems have all had an adverse effect on the efficiency of the Service. The Commission's staff-training schemes are having a favourable effect, and as they