

Again, the Commission is answerable by law for the efficiency of the Public Service generally, and it is difficult for this responsibility to be met if the right of final appointment to, at any rate, senior positions, is not vested in it.

Under existing legislation it would be possible for the members of the Public Service Commission to be unanimous in their selection of an officer for advancement, for one member of the Public Service Board of Appeal to agree with the Commission; and yet for the decision to be upset by the two remaining members of the Board.

The Commission feels that its powers are considerably fettered and that administration suffers by this restriction. We think that a change in the present legislation is desirable in the interests of good administration, and are prepared to make recommendations.

CONDITION AND EFFICIENCY OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Public servants in New Zealand have always had a high sense of public duty. In New Zealand, as elsewhere, there has been an increasing tendency for citizens to expect their Governments to provide benefits and services. The functions of Government touch the lives of citizens to an increasing extent and bring additional responsibility to public servants. It is therefore all the more important that public servants should be above reproach in their official conduct. The Commission desires to maintain the high standard that has obtained in the past.

Section 15, Public Service Act, 1912, requires the Commission to report at least annually on the condition and efficiency of the Public Service. Last year it could not be claimed that the efficiency of the Service had been maintained at the pre-war standard. Preceding paragraphs in this report show what has been done to improve the efficiency of the Public Service, and, with the co-operation of Permanent Heads and officers generally, an improvement has been brought about. Increased efficiency is hampered mainly by factors beyond the immediate control of the Commission—namely, shortage of office accommodation, shortage of adequately trained staff, and the difficulty of transferring officers from one place to another because of housing and board and lodging problems. The Commission is doing its best to meet these problems, which are not peculiar to Public Service administration; and when the situation eases there should be further improvement in departmental efficiency.

INTEGRITY AND LOYALTY OF SERVICE

Be efficiency as important as it may, we will, we are sure, be on unquestioned ground when we attach still greater importance to integrity. Nothing is to be more jealously guarded, nor the object of more unceasing vigilance, than the honesty, the trustworthiness, the incorruptibility of our Public Service. It has high traditions already; our business is to see that they are kept up. The Commission, for their part, will spare no effort to uncover delinquencies and to correct departmental methods that allow them. They will press for appropriate criminal proceedings where breach of trust is proved—the mere termination of employment is clearly inadequate punishment.

SECURITY POSITIONS

The Commission agrees that positions involving secrecy and national security should not be held by persons who admit membership of or are reasonably believed to be in active association with organizations the objects or methods of which conflict with the national interest. This consideration is taken into account when appointments are made, and it applies also to the present holders of such positions. The Commission adheres, none the less, to the principle that, according to their fitness, all persons in New Zealand of British nationality, regardless of race, sex, or political or religious belief, should have equal opportunities for appointment to and advancement in the Public Service. This we accept as basic in our democracy and way of life; we do not think that what has been