

In stating the cost per patient above, interest on capital expenditure is omitted, and also for repairs charged to the Public Works Consolidated Fund. Adding these items, the approximate full cost per annum will be—

	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Average gross cost in mental hospitals	...	...	36	17	9
Proportion of Head Office salaries and expenses	16	4½			
Proportion of fees for medical certificates, &c.	7	0½			
			1	3	5½
Proportion of interest (averaged at 4 per cent.) on Public Works expenditure from July, 1877, to 31st March, 1913	...	...	7	4	1½
Proportion of interest (averaged at 4½ per cent.) for capital cost previous to above period	...	...	0	13	8½
Gross cost	...	...	45	19	0½
Less receipts for maintenance and sale of produce	...	...	11	11	0½
Net cost			£34	7	11½

In 1911 the full cost so reckoned was £42 14s. 3d., and the net £31 4s. 8½d.

The Staff.

Before making any remarks on the discipline and control of the staff, I will take the opportunity of expressing my opinion that the large majority are of a class that any Department may well be proud of, loyal, conscientious, humane, clean-living, and performing their duties to the best of their ability. We employ nearly six hundred people, and it is obvious that in that number there will be, from time to time, persons who manage to pass muster but are unsuited for the occupation. In past years when the control was local the discipline was consequently better; and, be it understood, that discipline does not mean regimentation and sinking of individuality, but a prompt execution of orders, strict obedience, alertness, and the performing of duties without fear or favour. Now and again a mistake may have been made in dispensing with the services of an employee upon evidence which perhaps justified little more than grave suspicion; but an officer in charge of any institution very soon estimates the calibre of his staff, and it may be taken for granted that he will do all he can to retain the services of those he finds trustworthy, and, if any error occurred, such as stated above hypothetically, it would not have been in a case of a person who was otherwise entirely satisfactory. I do not say that such mistakes were made, but they were alleged, and I would therefore point out that any hardship inflicted would have been almost nominal, as the labour-market would soon absorb any such individual. But what I do say is that it is far better to make an occasional mistake in the interests of the patients than to retain on the staff members in whom implicit confidence cannot be placed. It is common knowledge that cases of employees whose services were dispensed with were made grounds for attack on the officer in charge and on the Department, and that Boards of Appeal were asked for in order to reinstate such persons. To good attendants and nurses a Board of Appeal was meaningless—they were never likely to be brought face to face with it; but to the careless or incompetent or persons temperamentally unfitted for the work, who could keep themselves from glaringly offending it would have been a protection, as it was calculated to increase the difficulties of dispensing with their services. It was pointed out that such Boards, suitable enough in some spheres, were not at all desirable when one was dealing with the oversight, care, and control of the irresponsible, but though the Boards were staved off, the position was forced, and an injury was done in that practically all dismissals became subject to review. Under these circumstances, it became difficult to club together a number of minor offences, because there would be a tendency to judge a case on the last upon which action was taken; and also carelessness in small matters, or a domineering tone of voice, could not be taken for an indication of conduct which made further service undesirable, because an officer in charge could not risk an employee whom he considered unsuitable being replaced after suspension. The general tendency of thus taking the power of dismissal from the Superintendents, except, practically, in cases of actual ill treatment, was to lower the discipline, and the mere fact that cases were subject to review made it more difficult to get evidence from fellow-employees. This tended to belittle the authority of the Superintendents, and to counteract this to some extent the probationary period was raised to a year, which provision has been preserved in the Public Service Act, 1912. This period permits a good deal of weeding-out before permanent appointment. But that is not sufficient; some of the weeding-out has to be done subsequently, and it is to that subsequent weeding-out that trouble is due, for the reasons above stated.

An incident which occurred towards the end of last year, and the new Public Service Act, under which our employees cease to be monthly servants and may appeal to a Board, impelled me to make the above remarks, and I trust that I have made it clear that we have a good case for differential treatment. The incident referred to was the ill treatment of a patient by an attendant. The evidence was sufficient for our purposes, and the man was dismissed. We thought the evidence was sufficient for a prosecution, but the man was acquitted. Our knowledge of them allowed us to give proper value to the evidence of patients, and I am confident that our action was right, but if one is to regard the jury as a Board of Appeal that man would be returned to the service.

In the Civil Service Act, 1886, our staff were three-monthly servants, but the Act was amended in the following year, making them monthly servants. Doubtless the same difficulties presented themselves then as at present. In most services it is not inconvenient to give three months' notice, but in this Department, when one does not wish to retain the services of an officer, he should be off the