

its full powers. There has, for example, been no inspection by the Treasury and no examination of the method of account-keeping of Departments, with the result that a mass of work is unnecessarily duplicated at considerable expense and to the detriment of efficiency. Some Departments, it is said, pay little heed to the directions of the Treasury, and in the past, when the Treasury has endeavoured to assert itself in simple matters it has often happened that the Minister in charge of the offending Department has been called in to support his own officers, which he would naturally do.

While the lack of co-operation may be to some extent accounted for by the absence of a central control, such as now exists, the position has been rendered more difficult in the past by the number of small Departments which, although nominally grouped under large Departments, maintain a practically independent existence. In referring to this matter, the Hunt Commission of 1912 remarked that—

“The head of every minor Department wishes to magnify his office and make it appear as important as possible in order that he may break free from the leading-strings of the Secretary of the Department under which he is grouped, and become a secretary on his own account; and he too is assisted in doing this by all the principal officers under him, because if they can increase the importance of the head of their Department, their own importance also increases.”

The main Departments, with few exceptions, do not appear, so far as I have been able to ascertain, to exercise even a casual control over their so-called subordinate Departments. Theoretically, there are sixteen main Departments, but there are actually thirty-three, which are practically independent in all respects. Much unnecessary expense and waste of force appears to be the result of this excessive subdivision. The Commissioners found, for example, that there was a Department known as the Advertising Office which had been built up from small beginnings until the staff consisted of a Clerk in charge at £350, an Accountant at £230, with three clerks and a messenger: a total expenditure for salaries of £1,199. This Department was housed in quarters at a considerable distance from the mother Department of Internal Affairs. On attention being called to the matter, it was found that the whole of the work could be transferred to the main Department and the expenditure reduced to £765.

So great has the division become that in at least two important Departments the tendency has been to rigidly separate every section of the office, each section having most of the machinery of an independent Department and offering the same lack of co-operation within the Department itself as would exist if the divisions of the Department were separate concerns.

It would be possible to multiply examples of the lack of co-operation between Departments and the branches of Departments, but it is desirable to defer reporting fully on the matter until it is ascertained by further inspections of Departments how far improvements suggested by the Commissioners have been given effect to.

MANAGEMENT.

As the functions of permanent heads of many of the Departments are analogous to those of managers of large businesses, their duties are of a very responsible nature. In the course of inspection of Departments it has been found that permanent heads of the commercial Departments are keenly alive to the necessity for economy and efficiency in carrying on the operations of their Departments. In other Departments the necessity may not always be apparent. It is interesting to note that in dealing with the question some years ago the Public Service Board of New South Wales remarked that—

“The conditions obtaining in every service are such that the heads of Departments and heads of branches are under the temptation to lose sight of their functions as business managers. This tendency appears to be inevitable, and no one has hitherto been able to devise a satisfactory way of checking its operation. To preach the need of economy in labour and material to a business man would generally be a work of supererogation, so clearly does he recognize how much depends upon details which affect the balance-sheet. The business man will pay very highly for rare abilities—much more highly, in fact, than the State is prepared to pay exceptional