

## TRADITION.

The Commissioners could not fail to observe in the course of their inspection that the outstanding feature of a number of Departments is their innate conservatism, which has often been carried to such an extreme as to discourage excellent schemes for improvement which, if carried out years ago, would have saved the country large sums of money. It is difficult in all cases to account for the way in which some Departments cling to costly tradition. A desire for peace on the part of controlling officers, no doubt, blinds their eyes to the fact that they are expected to be on the alert to adopt means which will result in greater efficiency or greater economy. When it is added that in some Departments promotion has often been the result of seniority irrespective of the merits of the officer promoted, it is evident that officers with limited outlook have drifted into positions which could under the old organization be held without need for the study of efficiency or economy. The tendency is not only to follow obsolete systems, but also to regard them as the only perfect ones. Some Departments seem to have changed their methods in only a slight degree for years, and even now time is being expended in collecting information for returns which are absolutely useless. One of the most expensive traditions is that of clinging to systems of work performed in the old Provincial Departments. In the case of one large Department each of the district offices appears to be working on the old provincial system, which varied in every province. This is well known to the Department, but apparently no one has yet had the energy or the courage to establish a uniform system. The result is that when an officer is removed from one provincial district to another he has to a large extent to learn his business over again.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS.

Under such conditions it will not be surprising to learn that suggestions for improvements were conspicuous by their absence, or, if made, were disregarded. A case has come under my notice in which one of the ablest officers in the Service was not only discouraged but, in a way, threatened with penalties if he persisted in pressing for the adoption of new methods. Several valuable suggestions, which could easily have been carried out, were made by the Hunt Commission of 1912, but it could not be found that any steps had been taken to carry them into effect. It is gratifying to report that a marked improvement has taken place since the beginning of the year. The head of one of the most important Departments recently informed me that the change which had come over his officers was remarkable; instead of being content to see the work carried on as it had been done for years, every officer is on the lookout for possible improvements. This is by no means confined to the Department referred to, and I am already in receipt of valuable suggestions made with the object of securing greater efficiency at less cost. Under the old organization Departments knew little of each other, and, owing to the different control in matters of staff and organization, the great advantages to be obtained by co-operation between Departments have been lost. The Commissioners look upon suggestions by officers not only from the point of view of the value of the suggestions themselves, but as a means of encouraging a general interest in the work of Departments which would otherwise be absent. It is intended in future reports to name officers whose suggestions have been adopted.

## STAFF CONDITIONS.

At the present time the Clerical Division of the Service is composed of two main elements—namely, officers who entered the Service after competitive examination, and officers, formerly temporary, who became automatically permanent under the provisions of the 1907 Classification and Superannuation Act, or officers who became permanent without examination in certain Departments which were exempt from the operation of the Civil Service Acts. Other officers appear to have been appointed without examination, generally by way of promotion from non-clerical positions. Unfortunately, when dealing with the question of temporary officers in 1907, it must have been overlooked that officers