

should be brought more into harmony with local requirements and advances in scientific research.

It is hoped that during the current year a distinct advance will be made in the direction of centralizing the assembling of statistical data, thus ensuring that a specialized staff, with the assistance of the latest mechanical aid, will undertake this important work.

TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES.

The passing of the Temporary Employees Act, 1913, made provision for the permanent appointment of temporary employees who were in Departments on the 1st April of that year. Power was given to the Commissioner to make regulations determining the conditions of employment of such persons, prescribing conditions under which they might be appointed to the Public Service, and providing that persons appointed by virtue of any such regulations should not in any case obtain precedence over public officers appointed before them. Regulations were made on the 8th April and the 28th July, 1914, and 251 employees, whose annual salaries now total £42,445, were appointed to the permanent staff.

Under the Act the persons appointed cannot take precedence of officers who were in the Service before them, and cannot be promoted until the latter reach a higher class. This should avoid the difficulty which arose under the Act of 1907, when all persons who had been continuously employed for five years were deemed to have been permanently appointed, without any provision being made to protect the interests of officers permanently appointed before them.

Apart from casual labourers and the like, the two main classes of temporary employees were found to be clerks and draughtsmen. It is not necessary to consider whether there should have been temporary clerks or draughtsmen in the Service in 1914 who had been employed for some years, seeing the provisions of the Act of 1907 restricting temporary employment.

It was quite inexcusable on the part of the Lands and Survey Department that steps should not have been taken to comply with the spirit of the 1907 Act by training its own draughtsmen, and thus reducing the need to employ temporary draughtsmen unless actually required for short periods to cope with emergencies. Judging by the experience of the Commissioners, there is a tendency in more than one Department to avoid the responsibility of training cadets, and to plead that business cannot go on without the appointment of adults. Apparently, as the result of the stand the Commissioners have taken, this now frequently takes the form of asking for trained officers from some other Department; but, while it is advisable that cadets should not remain too long in some of the smaller Departments, it should be obvious that the attempt to avoid temporary inconvenience by asking for the appointment of an officer from another Department or a temporary clerk, instead of training a cadet, will assuredly lead to difficulty in the future. In the larger Departments there should always be a number of cadets undergoing a course of training to fit them to fill vacancies as they arise.

In the reports of the Public Service Commissioners of other countries strong representations are made as to the undesirability of temporary employment of clerks. The Public Service Commissioner of the Commonwealth, in referring to the matter, says that "The histories of the Public Services of the States and of other countries are not wanting in precedents which show the dangerous potentialities latent in such a body" [permanent temporaries] "who sooner or later clamour to be placed on the permanent establishment, and whose claims Governments have found it difficult to deny." This has occurred twice in New Zealand, and it was hoped that the action taken under the Temporary Employees Act would place matters on a satisfactory footing for the future. On the whole, there was every prospect that the temporary clerk and temporary draughtsman would disappear, with the exception of a few who, although otherwise qualified for appointment under the Temporary Employees Act, could not, for health or other reasons, be placed on the permanent staff. Unfortunately, the disturbance of the permanent staff, owing to the absence of so many officers on military duty and the increased work in the Defence Department, necessitated a number of temporary appointments. These were, however, made on the distinct understanding that the employment would be strictly limited to the period prescribed by the Public Service Act. This may in some cases have to be