

their pay to a vote other than salaries. Owing to the arrangement between the Audit Department and this Office, this was promptly observed.

(2.) The Permanent Head of a Department who has authority to engage labourers expressed his intention, if the Commissioner did not provide a clerk, to engage a man as a labourer and give him clerical work. The request for a clerk was the result of the retirement of a labourer who had been performing clerical work unknown to the Commissioners.

(3.) An officer who was given authority to engage a temporary clerk employed his own son, although he had been expressly forbidden to do so.

(4.) An officer engaged his daughter as a temporary clerk without any authority to engage temporary clerical assistance. The amount of wages paid was surcharged against the officer concerned.

Matters such as these cannot be regarded as trivial. The whole aim of the Public Service Act is that there should be an ordered arrangement of employment in the Public Service, under which it can be made clear to Parliament what is expended on clerical and other assistance, and, moreover, that every eligible person who applies for employment should have a right to consideration. To employ clerks nominally as labourers defeats the first, and the employment of the near relative of an officer is not calculated to do justice to applicants in general. There is, of course, nothing to prevent the son or daughter of an officer being appointed as the result of competitive examination, but the Commissioners in such cases insist that the appointment should not be in the same office, and, if possible, not in the same Department, as that in which the parent is employed.

Regulations have been made requiring Permanent Heads to give the matter of inspection of stores the closest attention, yet, with the exception of one Department, the Commissioners have not been advised (as provided by the regulations) that a satisfactory system of inspection has been followed.

#### ATTENDANCE OF OFFICERS.

From their own observation, and information which has been received, the Commissioners regret to state that the attendance of many of the officers in Departments is far from satisfactory. Though attendance-books are required to be kept, and provision made for supervision by responsible officers, yet the Commissioners have evidence to show that accurate records in many cases are not maintained by the officers whose duty it is to do so. Notwithstanding that the regulations require that no officer shall, except on official business or by express permission of the Permanent Head or head of the branch, leave his office during office hours without entering the period of such absence (if not on official business) in the attendance-book, it has come under notice that this has been done with frequency by certain officers. The attendance-books thus afford no true record of the actual time many officers are engaged on official duty. Such evasion of duty is reprehensible in itself, besides giving rise to unfavourable criticism of the Service generally.

#### APPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT.

Table X gives particulars of the applications for employment, other than advertised positions, received during the year. There has been a marked increase in the total number as compared with the previous year—4,246 as against 2,401.

The number of candidates who were successful at the Public Service Entrance Examination held in December last was 668, as compared with 584 at the previous examination.

#### DEPARTMENTAL ANNUAL REPORTS.

The annual reports of most Departments are not only of very great volume as compared with other countries, but in addition there is an elaboration of detail which does not appear to warrant the labour required in its preparation. It was considered that a great saving in Departments, and incidentally in the Government Printing Office, would result from a revision of the existing practices if the reports, without impairing their usefulness, were made as brief as possible.

This was represented to Government, who took prompt steps to instruct Departments; and though at that time the reports for the previous year were well