

obsolete. It was considered that immediate steps should be taken to reorganize the work of this important branch of the Department.

It is to be regretted that no attempt has been made by the Department to introduce the practices outlined in the Stores Regulations made under authority of the Public Service Act. The Commissioners feel that no valid reason exists for this neglect. How seriously this may have affected the transactions in stores will be understood when it can be said that no one can guarantee that the Department has not been subjected to fraud and speculation.

The Commissioners have pointed out from time to time that the existing method should be remodelled with the least possible delay, and an efficient form of administration adopted; and with this object in view appointed a Stores Manager, who took up his new duties in August last. Up to the present his duties have been confined principally to an inspection of the method and practices in use, but no real attempt has been made to satisfactorily deal with the position.

The Stores Manager's detailed report fully confirms the statements made in the Commissioner's First Report, wherein it was stated,—

“Nothing but a complete recasting of the present stores system can be satisfactory; the duplication and overlapping at present carried out is incapable of any reasonable explanation, and how it has been allowed to develop and continue is not understood.”

In the near future, however, it is hoped that, as a result of persistent representation by the Commissioners, something definite will be undertaken to safeguard the Department's interests. The services of an experienced officer from Australia have been obtained to co-operate with selected departmental officers in framing a workable scheme.

Stores Tender Board.—The second annual report of the Board appears in Appendix A hereto. The Board draws particular attention to the advisability of having one Board to deal with all tenders for stores. The regulations under the Public Service Act require that this should be done.

Central Store.—The advisability of making provision for a central store for all Government Departments has occupied the serious attention of the Commissioners during the year. In the First Report it was stated, “Stores administration is costing the Dominion large sums of money annually, and it is a matter for consideration whether it would not be possible to consolidate the interest of the several Departments, and provide one store common to the whole.” Information upon this subject has been received from Australia, and there appears to be no reason for continuing the present costly practices whereby several independent staffs deal with matters of a like character. The staffing of the stores branches of the several Departments has not received the attention which its importance has merited. The officers in charge of stores should be men experienced in this particular work, and should fully understand the scope and possibilities of the whole working of the branch in which they are engaged.

The inauguration of a central store would afford facilities for officers to specialize in and to acquire a complete knowledge of stores administration.

AMENDMENTS TO GENERAL REGULATIONS.

During the year the principal amendments made were as follows:—

Regulation 209 was amended limiting the amount payable to an officer performing higher duties to £150 per annum in addition to his salary.

Regulation 8A, dealing with payment for extra duties, was revoked, and special regulations defining the conditions under which overtime may be worked, and the rate of payment in such cases, were gazetted on the 10th September, 1914.

Regulation 219, dealing with the giving of notice of any decision by the Commissioner, &c., to an officer by notice in the Public Service Official Circular.

Stores Regulations: The procedure in connection with deposits with tenders, and also as regards bond for the due fulfilment of contracts, was considerably simplified.