

ment of committees of officers set up for the purpose of reviewing all books and forms. It is regretted that little progress in this direction has been made during the past year. Departments are required to submit for approval all new books and forms before authorizing the printing thereof; but, while satisfactory results have been obtained in regard to the new forms, much still remains to be accomplished from the revision of existing books and forms. The matter is of the more importance at the present time owing to the probable shortage in paper-supplies.

STORES.

48. Notwithstanding the remarks that have been made from year to year in the reports of the Commissioner on the subject of stores, little real advance has been made by Departments in improving their methods. The problem appears to be, not to devise a proper scheme of organization, but to have a scheme approved and carried out.

49. The stores management of the country is a notable example of failure to take advantage of the opportunities for organization on a business basis, to which the large operations of Government so readily lend themselves.

50. When the Commissioners assumed office it was found that, in addition to the stores of the larger Departments, a number of smaller Departments maintained stores and storekeepers apparently for no other purpose than to handle articles twice too often, with a corresponding result of increased overhead charges. After considerable trouble the Commissioners succeeded in transferring most of the small departmental stores to the Government Stationery Store. The Education Store, for example, was found to be quite unnecessary, unless devised to ensure overlapping and unnecessary cost. It is now in course of transfer to the Government Stationery Store.

51. These arrangements, while satisfactory so far as they go, are part of the question which has been recommended by the Commissioners to be dealt with in a larger aspect.

52. As frequently pointed out, the whole of the storekeeping operations should be concentrated in a central store, and purchasing and distributing carried out on proper lines.

53. At present the Government stores are those of the Defence, Railways, Post and Telegraph, Government Stationery, Public Works, Police, Marine, and Mental Hospitals.

54. As an instance of what is possible with proper co-ordination, the operations of the Supplies Board, established for the purpose of purchasing stores for the Defence Department, may be alluded to. Assisted by a Board of three business men, who volunteered for the purpose, the purchase of supplies for the Defence Department is now on such a footing that arrangements are made for many months ahead, and it is quite certain that the buying is on the most favourable basis. It is understood that the saving in money owing to the operations of the Board, as compared with the former system, has been very large.

STORES TENDER BOARD.

55. The Third Annual Report of the Board is printed in Appendix A hereto. Particular reference is again made by the Board to the advisability of one central authority dealing with all matters relating to tenders for stores. This matter has again been represented to Government by the Commissioners, and it is hoped that some definite action will be taken in the direction already suggested.

56. Government has also been recommended to improve the constitution of the Board.

AUDIT OF STORES.

57. In the Third Report reference was made to the necessity of placing the audit of stores on a satisfactory basis. Regulations were made and gazetted.

58. To enable the requirements of the regulations to be efficiently carried out the Controller and Auditor-General made a request for the appointment of an Inspector of Stores, and an advertisement inviting applications for the position was inserted in the New Zealand and Australian papers. The Auditor-General