

For this reason it may be necessary to extend the period of probation in the case of junior appointments to three years.

DIVISIONS OF OFFICERS.

Reference has been made in a previous report to the desirability of an alteration in the grouping and designation of the principal divisions of the Service, viz.: Administrative, Professional, Clerical, Educational, General. As, however, legislative authority would be necessary to effect the alteration suggested, the matter has been deferred. With a view, however, to adjusting the relative salaries in the Professional and Clerical Divisions, advantage was taken of the alteration in the scales to make the salary steps similar in both divisions.

CONCLUSION.

The last annual report was purposely brief, but this year, on account of the regrading, it is considered opportune, for the information of those interested in Public Service administration, to outline the main principles underlying the system of Commissioner control, and the method adopted in classifying the Service.

In an administration including within its ambit the control of some forty Departments, embracing approximately fifteen thousand permanent and temporary employees, certain individual cases of dissatisfaction are bound to arise. Speaking in general terms, however, it can be safely asserted that the bulk of the Service is satisfied that the present system is an improvement on the old order of things. That certain anomalies will crop up is inevitable, but so long as there is honesty of purpose in the administration of the Act the machinery is sufficiently elastic to enable any wrongs to be righted. The main redeeming feature of the present system is that it contemplates the abolition of all patronage with regard to appointments, promotions, and privileges in the Public Service, and at the same time affords statutory safeguards to the rights and interests of officers by providing a legally constituted channel for the redress of any grievances.

After a long association with the Service it can be definitely stated that the Public Service in recent years has shown marked improvement in efficiency. There is an impression that there is a wide dissimilarity between the conduct of Government affairs and private business. This idea is usually founded upon premises only partially true. It is assumed that private business is invariably efficiently managed, free from interference and changes of policy, but that Government Departments are overstaffed with incompetent officers, are subject to continual political interference, and that, if only a business man had charge of affairs, many savings could be effected. While it is obvious that in any large organization there is always scope for economical readjustment, what critics overlook is that, in the nature of things, there is a wide distinction in principle between State enterprise and private business, in that the main purpose of the one is public well-being, and the other individual gain. It is a fallacy to believe that because a man has been successful in amassing a great personal fortune he is therefore best qualified to lay down principles of public administration or finance. The chief function of profit-making in the world of business is astute competition, whereas the chief function of public administration is wise co-ordination. Although there is a wide distinction in principle, in method the difference is not so evident. In this respect critics fail to take into consideration the magnitude of the organization. A comparison of the methods adopted would disclose that there is a greater dissimilarity between a large business and a small one than between the organization of a large Government Department and a private concern of comparable size. Indeed, it can be claimed that in many Departments modern methods are in vogue which compare favourably with outside business firms. It can safely be asserted that of the faults which are ascribed at times to the administration of Government Departments, all of them, and in some cases worse, could be found in the administration of many successful business concerns. The fact that public activities are more open to public review tends to magnify any deficiency in public administration, thereby making it appear to contrast unfavourably with the conduct of private enterprise.

It is desired to place on record appreciation of the consideration and hearty co-operation which have been extended by controlling officers and others during the past year.

P. VERSCHAFFELT, }
A. D. PARK, } Commissioners.

B. L. DALLARD, Inspector.