

It would be of advantage if all departmental cars were appropriately and plainly branded, thereby providing one means by which the improper use may be detected. It is only fair to say, however, that instances of the private use of Government cars are very rare.

PROMOTION BY MERIT.

As has been stressed in previous reports, one of the basic principles underlying the present system of control of the Public Service is that of promotion by merit. Fitness, by reason of special qualifications and general aptitude, invariably takes precedence to claims to promotion based on seniority alone. Adherence to this policy has again been evidenced by the fact that with respect to the positions in which promotion was involved during the year ending 31st March, 1926, the senior officer was appointed in thirty-seven instances, and in these cases only because seniority was coupled with the necessary efficiency.

APPOINTMENTS ANNULLED.

During the year ended 31st March, 1926, the services of thirty-eight persons who were still on probation were dispensed with for various reasons.

PERIOD OF PROBATION.

All new appointees are admitted to the Service subject to a period of probation. Section 39 of the Public Service Act provides that the period of probation is not to be less than six months. In 1921, Departments were advised that the period would be extended to not less than two years. Experience has shown the wisdom of the extension, particularly in the cases of new entrants for cadetships. It is felt that the period should be further extended in this latter case, and a period of four years substituted for two years. This would give an added opportunity, both for Departments and new entrants, to ensure that a career in the Public Service will be a successful one.

It will be readily admitted that difficulty arises when an attempt is made to predict what aptitudes a new entrant from sixteen to eighteen years of age will develop: he may prove quite unsuited to a career in the Public Service. This matter was dealt with in the Report of the Public Service Commission of 1912, and the views therein expressed bear repetition:—

“In addition to young fellows of ability, there will be a certain proportion of young men who, either through want of capacity or because the work in the Government service is not congenial to them, will not be a success. This is found to be the case in every large business concern, and the business method of dealing with cases of this kind is to pass them out of the Service as soon as it is found that they are unsuitable for it. Some such method should be adopted in the Public Service, and we think, therefore, that a maximum age should be fixed for all officers in Class 1. We would suggest twenty-five years of age. If an officer did not show sufficient merit to be selected from Class 1 to go into Class 2 before he reached the age of twenty-five years he should be required to leave the Service. It is better for the State and better for the individual that this should be so. Many young fellows start their work in life in a line that is not suited to them. If they remain in it they will be failures for life, but if they pass out of it early in life they will probably get into something else which will suit them, and perhaps be successful. It is no hardship for a young fellow of not over twenty-five years of age to have to go and look for other work: but if an inefficient man is allowed to remain in the Service until he gets on towards middle age, and perhaps has a wife and family to support, it is difficult to know what to do with him. It is a hardship to those who are dependent upon him to turn him out, and if he remains he is merely a passenger—a burden to the Service and a confirmed failure in life. In addition to this bar at twenty-five years of age, in order that cadets who are not likely to become suitable officers should be passed out of the Service as quickly as possible, and so have the number of those who would pass out at twenty-five reduced to the smallest possible dimensions, we think that the first three years of service should be considered years of probation. At any time during these three years a cadet should be required to leave the Service if he seemed unlikely to prove suitable.”