

PROBATION.

In terms of the Public Service Act, all appointments to the Public Service are on probation only, subject to confirmation on the officer proving his fitness for permanent appointment. This is a very necessary provision to ensure that only officers likely to turn out satisfactory are appointed to the Public Service. It has been found in some cases that controlling officers have not exercised sufficient discretion in dealing with probationers who show little promise of becoming suitable for appointment. In England an experiment was tried by means of psychological tests to determine the fitness of prospective appointees. This has not yet been brought down to a practical working basis, but it is clear that if the social waste arising from economic misfits is to be prevented it is desirable that "square pegs in round holes" should be discovered as early as possible, in order that a more suitable and congenial avenue of employment may be sought. This principle is confirmed by the 1912 Commission dealing with the Public Service of New Zealand.

In many instances, owing to the existing economic conditions, although the appointee may be quite well aware that he is not suited to the task at which he is engaged, he will be influenced by the difficulty of finding alternative employment, and unless definite action is taken by those in authority over him he drifts on, ultimately becoming more or less of a dead-weight and an unproductive overhead burden. In order to minimize this possibility arrangements have been made for progress probation reports to be sent to the Commissioner at frequent intervals—in some cases three-monthly reports are required, and prospective appointees are required to be advised of their deficiencies or inaptitude at an early stage.

During the year ended 31st March, 1929, thirty-seven appointments were annulled for various reasons, the number in the previous year being thirty-eight. In addition, several appointees have had their period of probation extended until such time as the Commissioner is satisfied that they are likely to become efficient officers.

STORES AND ACCOUNTS.

Close attention has been given to the matter of the more efficient control of stores and the improvement of methods of departmental accounting. The close co-operation of Audit and Treasury with departmental accounting officers is steadily bringing forward to practical fruition the idea for each Department to produce a departmental balance-sheet on commercial lines for incorporation in a national balance-sheet, thereby enabling the administration to be reviewed on a profit-and-loss basis as well as from a policy point of view.

The benefits of the improved methods are already being reflected in greater economy, due to the facilitation of the analysis and scrutiny of all expenditure and a closer check on the use and consumption of stores.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS.

Under Public Service Regulation 17 officers are invited to forward, for the consideration of the Commissioner, any suggestions having for their object increased efficiency and economy. Even if these suggestions are not considered by the Commissioner to be suitable for adoption, the submission of an intelligent suggestion is regarded as an evidence of zeal, and it is duly noted on the personal file of the officer concerned.

Several suggestions were made during the year, and, although none was considered of sufficient novelty and merit to warrant monetary recognition, the following are deserving of mention herein :—

Name.	Department.	Suggestion.
Nestor, M. S. ..	Lands and Survey ..	Standardization of the various leases and licenses used by the Department.
Watson, J. H. ..	Lands and Survey ..	Amended Current Account Ledger-sheet.