

It is certain, however, that the fundamental driving force of the will to work arises from the knowledge that a man is being treated as an individual. To feel that one is a cog in a machine, a mere item on a staff list, is to deaden the desire to excel.

With an understanding of this it is amply displayed to the Service that every man is considered on his merits. His work and character are reported on by his Controlling Officers, inspecting officers from his own office and from the Commissioners' Office do likewise, and periodically officers have the opportunity of interviewing the Commissioners themselves. All this is done not with any restrictive objects, but that every officer under our control may have the sense that everything about him that concerns his service to the State is being conscientiously appraised so that his services may be fully utilized as time and opportunity permit.

We believe that in the interests of contentment of officers themselves and of the State the promotion system must not ignore the necessity for incentive. Merit must count.

To advance by seniority is to blunt the keen edge of endeavour, to spread throughout the whole State Service the dullness induced by the sense that it is just a mechanical arrangement that no amount of striving will surmount.

There are two prime causes of maladjustment in the individual and of inefficiency in the organization—one is undue retention on a routine job of men who are competent and qualified for higher status work; the other is the elevation of men to positions beyond their capacity.

So section 8 comes to be a basic law not only because we seek the efficiency of the Service, but because it represents the mainspring of human incentive and the well of contentment.

PROBATION.

It is a salutary and necessary power conferred upon the Commissioners that a period of probation must be served by all new appointees to the Public Service before their appointments are confirmed. Section 39 of the Public Service Act, 1912, provided for a period of at least six months' probation, but after a full experience the time was extended in 1921 to two years.

The arrangement is two-sided in its beneficial effect. Nothing is more unfair to a recruit than to condemn him to a life's work for which his training, temperament, and inclination make him fundamentally unsuited, and if at the end of the extended period of probation he cannot reach a reasonable standard it is mistaken kindness to let him remain in the Service. He may, and no doubt will, succeed in other walks of life. On the other hand, probably nothing puts such a strain on the internal economy of a Department as the irritation and the trials endured in the process of striving to fit a misfit. The Public Service is a large concern, and the fact that a newcomer does not fare well in one corner does not imply that there is no place at all for him. We have consistently striven to give each probationer every possible opportunity of displaying his fitness for one or another of the types of work available, but naturally there are limits to movement of that sort.

We are convinced, however, of the unwisdom of a formal confirmation of appointment. Controlling Officers ought not to take lightly their duty to report faithfully upon the recruits under their charge. It is a disadvantage to the State to retain an unsuitable officer. It is an unkindness to the probationer himself to carry him along the road of his career, knowing that nothing satisfactory can ever be made of him and that in the end disaster may befall him when it is too late to begin again. By such action he may be condemned to a life of mediocrity and drudgery when he might find success and pleasure in his work elsewhere.

Nevertheless Departments have their responsibilities. In committing a young man to them the Commissioners expect he will be adequately trained not only in his actual work, but in the whole organization of which he is a unit. During the whole process the trainee should be kept under rigorous observation and supervision and his future work should be determined by the particular aptitudes he displays.