

The practice of using a departmental committee to consider all applications for vacancies has now become established and is functioning effectively. In each case a Public Service Inspector is associated with senior officers of the Department concerned, and where the advice of an expert from another Department is desirable in reviewing the applications a suitable officer from that Department is associated with the committee. The recommendation of the committee is considered by the Permanent Head, who is usually able to concur in the committee's recommendation. In this way the Service can be assured that the qualifications and experience of all applicants, including those from Departments other than that in which the vacancy occurs, are reviewed with the utmost care and receive proper valuation for the particular vacancy.

It is gratifying to find that right throughout Departments there is a keen appreciation of the necessity for giving true service to the people with whom the Departments deal. It is easily possible for officers to fail to appreciate that what to them is simple and routine to outsiders may be difficult and involved. There is very little room for complaint in the attitude that officers are adopting in this sense, but Controlling Officers would do well to ensure that new appointees are fully imbued with the fact that it is their obligation to give the very highest degree of service to all members of the public, irrespective of the class of inquiry or assistance that may be sought. There is still just a tendency in some Departments for Controlling Officers to render themselves inaccessible to the public, whether inquiries come by telephone or by personal attendance. The Commissioner requires that all officers shall be available to inquirers with the greatest facility that is possible.

In spite of the above comments and notwithstanding the additional load which has been imposed upon the Service during the last few years, it may be said that the standard of efficiency has been maintained and that officers generally have responded very well indeed to the additional responsibilities thrust upon them. In some cases it has called for long hours of duty, but this has been cheerfully given. Many officers have seized the opportunity of demonstrating their fitness for filling positions in advance of their gradings and years of service.

PRINCIPLES REGULATING THE CONDUCT OF PUBLIC SERVANTS.

From time to time it has been suggested that Heads of Departments and others are not sympathetically administering the Government's policy.

The first duty of every public servant is to give his undivided allegiance to the State at all times and on all occasions when the State has a claim upon his services.

The late Sir Theodore Morison, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., C.B.E., when Vice-Chancellor, University of Durham, speaking on the subject of Civil Service traditions, stated, *inter alia* :—

The theory and practice of parliamentary Government is that decisions are taken by Ministers and that the Civil servants supply the Minister with the information necessary for coming to a right decision.

From this general proposition there follow certain consequences which have become maxims in Whitehall :—

- (1) The Civil servant must place before his chief the arguments on both sides of the case, fully and fairly. Whatever his own sympathies may be, he must put before his chief all the arguments which may be urged against the view which is taken in the office.
- (2) When the decision is once taken he must loyally carry out the policy chosen, even though he may have preferred a different one.
- (3) The Civil Service is responsible for continuity of policy, or such continuity as is possible under our system of party Government
- (4) The Civil servant must observe absolute silence and discretion as to what occurs in the office. The decision when once taken is that of the Minister or of Cabinet, and it is contrary to tradition for a Civil servant to take credit for any measure accepted by Parliament, though he may in fact have been the author of it. Self-effacement, therefore, at least in the eye of the public, is one of the conditions required of the Civil servant, and there follows from this effacement a correlative obligation upon the Minister. As the decision is his, the Minister must take full responsibility for it. If the decision happens to be wrong he must not shield himself by blaming his officials, and it is expected that he should defend his officials if they are attacked in public ; if he cannot defend them, he must resign.