



MINISTRY OF RECONSTRUCTION

Report of the
Machinery of Government
Committee

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1918

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Terms of Reference

To enquire into the responsibilities of the various Departments of the central executive Government, and to advise in what manner the exercise and distribution of the Government of its functions should be improved.

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MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

REPORT: PART I

To the Right Hon. C. Addison, M.D., M.P., Minister of Reconstruction.

Sir,

1. The Committee, appointed as a Sub-Committee of the Reconstruction Committee in July, 1917, and confirmed in their appointment on the establishment of the Ministry of Reconstruction, have the honour to report as follows:—

Terms of Reference and Procedure

2. We were appointed "To enquire into the responsibilities of the various Departments of the central executive Government, and to advise in what manner the exercise and distribution by the Government of its functions should be improved."

3. We have endeavoured to define in the first place the general principles which should govern the distribution of the responsibilities in question, and in the second place to illustrate the application of these principles in sufficient outline. Part I. of this Report deals with the results of our enquiries under the first of these heads, and Part II. with the results under the second. As regards the latter, it should be explained that we have not attempted to deal exhaustively with all the Departments of State, or to do more than give illustrations, in such detail as seemed practicable, of the manner in which the general principles laid down in Part I. might be applied; the reason being that, in present circumstances, there must necessarily be great uncertainty as to the extent to which the sphere of action of the central Government may be enlarged or restricted after the war, and as to the number and functions of the Departments which will be required.

4. Our investigations under the first head have made it evident to us that there is much overlapping and consequent obscurity and confusion in the functions of the Departments of executive Government. This is largely due to the fact that many of these Departments have been gradually evolved in compliance with current needs, and that the purposes for which they were thus called into being have gradually so altered that the later stages of the process have not accorded in principle with those that were reached earlier. In other instances Departments appear to have been rapidly established without preliminary insistence on definition of function and precise assignment of responsibility. Even where Departments are most free from these defects, we find that there are important features in which the organisation falls short of a standard which is becoming progressively recognised as the foundation of efficient action.

The Cabinet

5. But before dealing either generally or in detail—with Departmental organisation, some reference must be made to the functions and procedure of the Cabinet, which is the mainspring of all the mechanism of Government. Its constitution and the methods of its procedure must depend to a large extent on the circumstances of the time, on the personality of the Prime Minister, and on the capacities of his principal colleagues. But we may be permitted to

offer some general observations on the purposes which the Cabinet is, in our view, intended to serve, and the manner in which these purposes can most effectually be carried out.

6. The main functions of the Cabinet may, we think, be described as :—

- (a) the final determination of the policy to be submitted to Parliament ;
- (b) the supreme control of the national executive in accordance with the policy prescribed by Parliament ; and
- (c) the continuous co-ordination and delimitation of the activities of the several Departments of State.

7. For the due performance of these functions the following conditions seem to be essential, or, at least, desirable :—

- (i) The Cabinet should be small in number—preferably ten, or, at most, twelve ;
- (ii) it should meet frequently ;
- (iii) it should be supplied in the most convenient form with all the information and material necessary to enable it to arrive at expeditious decisions ;
- (iv) it should make a point of consulting personally all the Ministers whose work is likely to be affected by its decisions ; and
- (v) it should have a systematic method of securing that its decisions are effectually carried out by the several Departments concerned.

8. It is scarcely necessary to consider whether these conditions were fulfilled by the Cabinets and the Cabinet procedure to which we had become accustomed in the generation which preceded the outbreak of the war. It is sufficient to point out that during the war an entirely new type of Cabinet has been evolved, with new methods of procedure.

The Report of the War Cabinet for 1917 (Cd. 9005) opens with the following statement* :—

“The most important constitutional development in the United Kingdom during the last year has been the introduction of the War Cabinet system. This change was the direct outcome of the War itself. As the magnitude of the War increased, it became evident that the Cabinet system of peace days was inadequate to cope with the novel conditions. The enlarged scope of Government activity and the consequent creation of several new departments, made a Cabinet, consisting of all the Departmental Ministers meeting under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister, far too unwieldy for the practical conduct of the War. It was extremely difficult for so large a body to give that resolute central direction which became more imperative the more the population and resources of the nation had to be organised for a single purpose—the defeat of German militarism.”

9. It seems probable that the constitution and procedure of the War Cabinet will not be found entirely suitable to the conditions which will prevail when peace has been restored. But we think that many of the considerations above mentioned will be found to apply with equal force ; and that a rearrangement of the supreme direction of the executive organisation as it formerly existed has been rendered necessary, not merely by the war itself, but by the prospect after the war.

Such a rearrangement has been attempted, and the question whether it has yet assumed an adequate form, or works as efficiently as it might, is quite

* See also Lord Curzon's speech in the House of Lords (Official Report, 19th June, 1918).

a different question from whether it is possible to return to the old order of things. We feel confident that the latter question must be answered in the negative.

10. Whether the new type of Cabinet should consist of Ministers in charge of the principal Departments of State, or of Ministers "without portfolio" able to concentrate their whole attention upon the problems submitted for their consideration, or of Ministers of both kinds, are questions which we do not propose to discuss here. But we think that there is one feature in the procedure of the War Cabinet which may well assume a permanent form, namely, the appointment of a Secretary to the Cabinet charged with the duty of collecting and putting into shape its agenda, of providing the information and material necessary for its deliberations, and of drawing up records of the results for communication to the Departments concerned.

11. There are, however, certain occasions on which the Cabinet meets, not for the purpose of taking decisions to be translated into executive action, but for deliberation upon questions of policy involving special considerations, and the suggestion in the foregoing paragraph implying the participation of a Secretary in the proceedings is not put forward as being applicable to meetings of this character.

Formulation of Policy

12. Turning next to the formulation of policy, we have come to the conclusion, after surveying what came before us, that in the sphere of civil government the duty of investigation and thought, as preliminary to action, might with great advantage be more definitely recognised. It appears to us that adequate provision has not been made in the past for the organised acquisition of facts and information, and for the systematic application of thought, as preliminary to the settlement of policy and its subsequent administration.

13. This is no new notion. There are well-known spheres of action in which the principle has been adopted of placing the business of enquiry and thinking in the hands of persons definitely charged with it, whose duty is to study the future, and work out plans and advise those responsible for policy or engaged in actual administration. The reason of the separation of work has been the proved impracticability of devoting the necessary time to thinking out organisation and preparation for action in the mere interstices of the time required for the transaction of business.

14. But the principle ought by no means to be limited in its application to military and naval affairs. We have come to the conclusion that the business of executive Government generally has been seriously embarrassed from the incomplete application to it of similar methods. It will not be possible to apply these methods as fully in the sphere of civil government, because the exact objectives of civil administration are less obvious and less easily defined than those with which the Navy and the Army are confronted; and the elaboration of policy cannot be so readily distinguished from the business of administration. But we urge strongly (a) that in all Departments better provision should be made for enquiry, research, and reflection before policy is defined and put into operation; (b) that for some purposes the necessary research and enquiry should be carried out or supervised by a Department of Government specially charged with these duties, but working in the closest collaboration with the administrative Departments concerned with its activities; (c) that special attention should be paid to the methods of recruiting the personnel to be employed upon such work; and (d) that in all Departments the higher

officials in charge of administration should have more time to devote to this portion of their duties.

15. The establishment in 1915, under the Lord President of the Council, of a new Department to develop and organise the knowledge required for the application of Science to Industry,* to keep in close touch with all Departments concerned with scientific research, to undertake researches on behalf of Departments, and to stimulate the supply of research workers, marked a stage in the recognition of a need which is not merely local or departmental, but national, and there is in our opinion good reason for extending what has been done here to other fields in which thinking is required in aid of administration.

16. A Cabinet with such knowledge at its disposal would, we believe, be in a position to devolve, with greater freedom and confidence than is at present the case, the duties of administration, and even of legislation. Even in countries where, as in the United States, there is a Federal Government with but little power to interfere in local administration, the value of systematic investigation and accumulation of general knowledge by Departments of the central Government, though unaccompanied by the power to apply it administratively, is regarded as of great importance; and we have come to the conclusion that where, as in this country, Parliament and the Cabinet are supreme, the analogy applies still more strongly.

17. The general question of devolution we do not regard as within the scope of our reference. However far in the direction of devolution Parliament may decide to go, the principle of providing the supreme Government with exact knowledge of the subject-matter to be dealt with is not the less essential. The possession of such knowledge would not, in our opinion, hinder free devolution, but would really facilitate it. We may here add that the gradual introduction of the co-operation of the Ministers of the Dominions in affairs which belong to a Cabinet now charged with the interests of the Empire as a whole, points to the probability that the organisation of the kind of knowledge we have in view is likely to become requisite in new directions.

Allocation of Functions between Departments

18. In addition to the two problems of the constitution and procedure of the Cabinet, and the organisation of enquiry and research, there is another which it is essential to solve for the smooth working of the executive as a whole. Upon what principle are the functions of Departments to be determined and allocated? There appear to be only two alternatives, which may be briefly described as distribution according to the persons or classes to be dealt with, and distribution according to the services to be performed. Under the former method each Minister who presides over a Department would be responsible to Parliament for those activities of the Government which affect the sectional interests of particular classes of persons, and there might be, for example, a Ministry for Paupers, a Ministry for Children, a Ministry for Insured Persons, or a Ministry for the Unemployed. Now the inevitable outcome of this method of organisation is a tendency to Lilliputian administration. It is impossible that the specialised service which each Department has to render to the community can be of as high a standard when its work is at the same time limited to a particular class of persons and extended to every variety of provision for them, as when the Department concentrates itself on the provision of one

* See the Reports of the Committee of the Privy Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, 1915-16 (Cd. 8336), 1916-17 (Cd. 8718), and 1917-18 (Cd. 9144).

particular service only, by whomsoever required, and looks beyond the interests of comparatively small classes.

19. The other method, and the one which we recommend for adoption, is that of defining the field of activity in the case of each Department according to the particular service which it renders to the community as a whole. Thus a Ministry of Education would be concerned predominantly with the provision of education wherever, and by whomsoever, needed. Such a Ministry would have to deal with persons in so far only as they were to be educated, and not with particular classes of persons defined on other principles. This method cannot, of course, be applied with absolute rigidity. The work of the Education Department, for example, may incidentally trench on the sphere of Health, as in the arrangements of school houses and care for the health of scholars. Such incidental overlapping is inevitable, and any difficulties to which it may give rise must in our opinion be met by systematic arrangements for the collaboration of Departments jointly interested in particular spheres of work. But notwithstanding such necessary qualifications, we think that much would be gained if the distribution of departmental duties were guided by a general principle, and we have come to the conclusion that distribution according to the nature of the service to be rendered to the community as a whole is the principle which is likely to lead to the minimum amount of confusion and overlapping. In this way such divisions of the business of Government as Health, Education, Finance, Research, Foreign Affairs, and Defence would each be under separate administration, the Cabinet being in a position of supreme executive direction, and Parliament holding the various Ministers directly responsible to it for the efficiency of the service with which they were respectively charged.

20. It is, moreover, only by distributing business between Departments on this principle that the acquisition of knowledge and the development of specialised capacity by those engaged in the several Departments can be encouraged to the full. These results are obviously most likely to be secured when the officers of a Department are continuously engaged in the study of questions which all relate to a single service, and when the efforts of the Department are definitely concentrated upon the development and improvement of the particular service which the Department exists to supervise.

21. It will be noticed that in certain cases the two principles of distribution which we have contrasted, namely, that of allocation according to the class of persons dealt with, and that of allocation according to the nature of the service rendered to the community, may lead to an identical concentration of functions. Thus, the great service of National Defence, which (whether given to one, or to two or to three Ministries) is essentially distinct from the function of the other Ministries, is also marked off by dealing, principally and specifically, with the large number of persons employed by the Government in all the various branches of the naval, military, and air services. In like manner, if the railways and canals should be nationalised, it would be necessary to make the administration of this great service of National Transport a separate Department, whether we had regard to the nature of the service thus rendered to the community, or to the dealings with so extensive a staff as would have to be employed. In short, there are, in relation to such nationalised services, two distinct forms of expert capacity which it is essential that the organisation should develop. One of these is ability in the recruitment, promotion, co-ordination, and direction of a large body of persons of different grades and capacities, engaged in a common enterprise of a peculiar nature. It is this part of the work which tends to

take up a large, and hitherto perhaps the greater, part of the time and thought of the Minister and his principal advisers. The other form of special ability in such nationalised occupations, certainly no less important, but of a different nature, is ability for the fulfilment of the technical requirements of the service which the Department has to render to the community. Thus, the Minister in charge of the Post Office is responsible to Parliament, both for the elaboration of a progressively increasing efficiency in the services which the Department undertakes for the community as a whole, such as the national systems of communication and remittance; and for the proper organisation of a very large staff of employees.

22. We may conclude that where any great enterprise is nationalised—in the sense of being carried out, in the main, by persons in direct Government employment—as is the case with regard to National Defence and the Postal and Telegraph service, and as may possibly be the case with regard to railways and the coal supply, such an administration must form the sphere of a separate Ministry or Ministries.

23. It is with regard to other functions of Government—those that we may term services of administrative supervision or control—that the contrast between the principle of distribution of work among Departments according to the class of persons to be dealt with, and the principle of distribution according to the service to be rendered, becomes more acute.

24. Even if the principle of allocation by services which we suggest is fully applied, cases will continue to arise in which consultation or discussion will be required between Departments, and decisions will be sought from the Cabinet, as to the allocation of new, or the redistribution of existing duties. Each of the Departments may maintain that the duties in question partake mainly of the nature of the service entrusted to the Department's general supervision, and that the proper development of that service will therefore not be secured if the primary responsibility for these duties is placed elsewhere.

25. We are satisfied that the present existence of Departments designed to minister to particular classes of persons greatly increases the complexity of such problems by introducing cross-divisions into the main division by services which ought to prevail. We think that if the functions of Departments could be distributed among Ministries organised mainly on the other principle, it would be easier to determine the allocation to its appropriate Department of any particular function.

26. We suggest that, if this were done, all decisions to concentrate functions in particular Departments should, subject to the main principle of allocation by services, be governed by the extent to which particular functions conduce to the primary end of that Department's administration. This distinction between dominant and subordinate interests in a given piece of work cannot be absolute or irrevocable. It must be drawn for practical purposes, and the decisions which follow from it will rightly be reversed if in process of time a subordinate interest becomes, even temporarily, a dominant one.

27. The distinction cannot be absolute, because work which is of primary interest to one Department may well be within the province of that Department even when some portion of it is also undertaken as a secondary interest by Departments devoted to other ends. If, as we suggest, there should be one Ministry of Education, of Health, and of Finance, in which functions relating primarily to those ends should in each case be concentrated, there must at the same time be, within other Ministries, special branches devoted to educational, hygienic, or financial work as secondary interests of the Ministries

within which they lie. Yet neither the Ministries of the primary interests nor the branches dealing with the secondary interests can operate with full effect unless they are in close and constant touch with each other. Sometimes this communication will need to be so close that there will have to be standing joint bodies of the Departments concerned. We refer in Part II. of this Report to existing arrangements of this kind, and we think that there are many cases in which the introduction of a similar procedure would be found helpful. Sometimes regular or informal communication on specific questions will suffice. But contact of some kind is vital if the service in question is not to languish in Departments in which it is secondary, and if the Department in which it is primary is to exercise its full potentiality for making whatever contribution lies in its power to the general maintenance of the highest possible standard in all branches of the work upon which its main forces are concentrated.

Departmental Organisation

28. We desire under this head to suggest the application of certain methods in regard to the organisation of Departments which seem to us of special importance.

29. *Financial Control.*—We think that it will be agreed that the effective control of Parliament over public expenditure can only be maintained if the organisation of each Department secures to the financial officers of the Department a full opportunity of scrutinising proposals for expenditure at a sufficiently early stage. Due recognition of the importance of financial control within each Department is necessary to enable the Treasury to discharge its responsibility for the general control of public expenditure, and to enable each Minister to explain and defend before Parliament the items of expenditure for which he is responsible.

The form of the arrangements requisite for this purpose will necessarily vary with the extent to which the activities of a particular Department involve the expenditure of money. But, apart from the cases in which a separate Minister of the Department is specifically responsible to Parliament for the finances of the service administered by the Department, and devotes his whole time to financial work, we think that all Departments should include in their staff an officer of high grade specially charged with financial duties, provided with a financial staff sufficiently strong to enable him to maintain a continuous survey of all proposals for expenditure originating within the Department, and regularly consulted before any decision on a matter of financial importance is arrived at by the Minister.

30. *Intra-Departmental Meetings.*—We would draw attention to the arrangements adopted as part of the recent reorganisation of the Board of Trade* for holding regular meetings of the Minister, the Parliamentary Secretaries, the permanent Heads of the Department, and the principal officers concerned, for the purpose of dealing with questions of policy which affect more than one section of the Board. We understand that these arrangements, which are not dissimilar in principle from those governing the operations of the Board of Admiralty and the Army Council, or the recently established Munitions Council in the Ministry of Munitions, have been found satisfactory in working; and we think that the question of applying them might well be considered in other Departments in which the business of the various sections is so closely related as to make it unsafe to rely upon less formal and regular communications between the officers concerned. Whilst the internal arrange-

* See Cd. 8912.

ments for meetings of this kind must, of course, differ from Department to Department, according to the nature and importance of the several functions with which each is charged, we suggest that it will be particularly important to provide that the heads of any professional or technical branches in a Department should be called into consultation at such meetings on questions upon which their expert knowledge may bear.

31. *Organisation and Ministerial Responsibility.*—We think that in arrangements of this kind may be found one answer to the objections which are sometimes raised to placing the sole responsibility for the administration of great Departments in the hands of a single Minister. Attempts have been made to distribute the burden of responsibility by other means. In some cases recourse has been had to the system of administrative Boards. We draw attention to the finding of the Royal Commission on the Civil Service* that this system is less effective in securing responsibility for official action and advice than the system followed in Departments where full responsibility is definitely laid upon the Minister; and we think that where, as in case of the Insurance Commissioners, a Board is set up without explicit statutory provision for a Minister responsible to Parliament for their work, the position is obviously unsatisfactory.

32. But the doctrine of Ministerial responsibility has also been criticised in another way. It has been said that there are certain functions of Government which require for their exercise a judicial temper and a position of independence that cannot be maintained by a Minister who is constantly exposed to criticism in Parliament. It was no doubt for these reasons that a special form of constitution was adopted in the case of the Road Board and the Development Commission; and we have observed a tendency to recommend the adoption of a similar procedure in the case of various bodies which it is proposed to set up in order to further the economic development of the country after the war.†

33. We are so far from thinking that the importance of a service to the community is *primâ facie* a reason for making those who administer it immune from ordinary Parliamentary criticism, that we feel that all such proposals should be most carefully scrutinised, and that there should be no omission, in the case of any particular service, of those safeguards which Ministerial responsibility to Parliament alone provides.

34. *Advisory Committees.*—But the preservation of the full responsibility of Ministers for executive action will not, in our opinion, ensure that the course of administration which they adopt will secure and retain public confidence, unless it is recognised as an obligation upon Departments to avail themselves of the advice and assistance of advisory bodies so constituted as to make available the knowledge and experience of all sections of the community affected by the activities of the Department.

35. In a number of cases effect has already been given to this principle, and Ministers have at their disposal the counsel of standing bodies composed upon various bases and described by a variety of names, either appointed under statutory authority, as in the case of the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education, the Advisory Council of the Scottish Education Department, or

* Fourth Report, Cd. 7338, Ch. IX., paragraphs 68, 69, 72.

† See, for example, the proposals as to a Board "to examine into all applications from industries for State assistance," contained in the Final Report of the Committee on Commercial and Industrial Policy after the War (Cd. 9035, paragraph 255); and the proposals as to the appointment of Electricity Commissioners contained in the Report of the Committee appointed by the Board of Trade to consider the question of Electric Power Supply (Cd. 9062, paragraphs 29, 30).

the Advisory Committee on Health Insurance ; or holding their appointment at the discretion of the Minister concerned, as in the case of the Consumers' Council of the Ministry of Food, or the Advisory Council which is to be attached to the Department of Commerce and Industry in the Board of Trade.

36. The precise form of organisation most suitable to an advisory body or bodies will always depend in the main upon the nature of the business of the Department to which they are to be attached. Different methods of constituting such bodies and calling them into consultation will be required according to the object that they are intended to pursue, which may be the development of the service rendered by a profession to the community, the advancement of knowledge in relation to a particular service, or the maintenance and improvement of the conditions of employment of persons engaged in that service.

37. So long as advisory bodies are not permitted to impair the full responsibility of Ministers to Parliament, we think that the more they are regarded as an integral part of the normal organisation of a Department, the more will Ministers be enabled to command the confidence of Parliament and the public in their administration of the services which seem likely in an increasing degree to affect the lives of large sections of the community.

38. *Employment of Women in the Civil Service.*—Our terms of reference entrust us with the duty of advising “in what manner the exercise and distribution by the Government of its functions should be improved,” and we are strongly of opinion that among the changes that should be made as conducive to this end must certainly be included an extension of the range and variety of the duties entrusted to women in the Civil Service and in practically all Departments.

39. The present position in this matter is that in many Departments, and particularly in the Departments established during the war, women form a majority of the total staff. The appointments which they hold are for the most part temporary, and it would clearly be inadvisable to accept the forms of emergency organisation under which women have been thus employed as suitable for incorporation in the permanent structure of Departments. Any such policy might be seriously prejudicial to the possibility of forming a reasoned estimate of the degree of efficiency attainable by women civil servants properly recruited, and regularly trained and organised for Departmental work, under less abnormal conditions. But whatever may be the future of the temporary Departments, and the arrangements for recruiting the Civil Service in future, it seems clear that a further extension of the employment of women in the Civil Service will be necessary.

40. A recommendation to this effect was made by the Royal Commission on the Civil Service, which reported in April, 1914, a few months before the outbreak of War.* The Royal Commission recommended that the Treasury, acting in communication with the various heads of Departments, and after consultation with competent women advisers, should institute an enquiry into the situations in each Department which might with advantage to the public service be filled by qualified women. There has been no opportunity under war conditions of carrying out such an inquiry into principles, and the employment of women in the Civil Service has been extended in order to meet urgent practical needs (many of them doubtless of a temporary character), and without that further investigation and deliberate settlement of principles which the Royal Commission proposed. It has inevitably resulted that the changes since 1914 in the scope and character of the employment of women have

been made frequently on haphazard lines, without any adequate comparison of the various Departmental methods adopted, whether as to recruitment, as to the proportion of women included in the total staff of Departments, as to supervision, or as to allocation of duties between the women and the men, and without the possibility of applying proper methods of training the large numbers of women continuously entering the Civil Service for the kind of work normally required by Departments. The effects of this may well be unfortunate unless this most important matter be carefully investigated and authoritatively reported upon without delay, and before any substantial modifications of the position as it was left on the cessation of hostilities are decided upon.

41. The Royal Commission was not unanimous on the question whether women should be admitted to the Class I. examination, either immediately or at some future time. The Majority Report recommends that specially qualified women should be eligible for appointment to administrative situations in Departments specially concerned with such services as education, health, and employment, but that such women should be selected by the method used for recruitment of professional officers, and should not be admitted to the Class I. examination. Six members of the Commission suggested as an alternative that a limited number of places should be assigned to women as part of the Class I. examination scheme.

42. The practical question whether women can be found suitable to perform duties comparable with those assigned to men in Class I. has to a large extent found an answer in the experience of the last four years, which has gone far to resolve any doubts upon the point. We understand that in certain Departments women have undertaken duties of the Class I. standard during the greater part of the war period, and have been found to perform these duties to the satisfaction of the Heads of the Departments in which they are employed.

43. We, therefore, think that it is no longer expedient in the public interest to exclude women on the ground of sex from situations usually entered by the Class I. examination, or from other situations usually entered by competition.

44. In our opinion there are, apart from those administrative posts for which either a man or a woman of sufficient education and experience may be equally suitable, certain posts, both in the Higher Division and in other grades, for which women, if properly qualified, are *primâ facie* more suitable than men. These posts should, we think, in future be assigned to women, and, as regards other posts, we think that the test of eligibility should have no relation to the question of sex, but should be whether a particular candidate male or female, is in all respects the one who appears best qualified and most likely to perform efficiently the duties attaching to a particular post.

45. With regard to the great majority of permanent appointments to the clerical establishment, which are made after selection by competitive examination conducted by the Civil Service Commissioners, we do not consider that, whether for Class I., the various Intermediate classes, or the Second Division, there is any reason for excluding persons of the female sex from entering for any examination, whatever the form of the educational tests which may in future be prescribed. We think that it should be open to any Department having posts to be filled to specify with regard to each vacancy whether the circumstances of the post and the duties to be performed are such as to make it undesirable for a woman or a man to be appointed, and we are also of opinion that within each Department promotion to higher posts should be dealt with on the same principles.

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46. The question of the remuneration of women employed in the Civil Service is, we are aware, one of the difficulties that has delayed the adoption of a considered and homogeneous scheme for their employment in the several Departments. On this, as on other points, whilst we are of opinion that no discrimination can properly be enforced merely on the ground of sex, we refrain from offering observations or recommendations, since, to be of any value, these would require the consideration of various highly technical and somewhat controversial questions, not only in the economic sphere, but in many other directions, on many of which there is at present an insufficiency of trustworthy records of experience. Further, we understand that at the present time the Government are conducting enquiries into a number of these questions, which have from certain points of view come to need very early consideration and decision.

47. We restrict ourselves here, therefore, to the general statement of our conviction (i.) that the absence of any substantial recourse to the services of women in the administrative staffs of Departments, and still more in their Intelligence branches (which we are unanimous in hoping to see set up by an increased number of Departments*), has in the past deprived the public service of a vast store of knowledge, experience and fresh ideas, some of which would, for particular purposes, have been far more valuable and relevant than those of even the ablest of the men in the Civil Service; and (ii.) that for the effective arrangement and performance of the largely extended duties which we think that women should undertake in the Civil Service, it will be essential that one or more women of special qualifications and experience should regularly be included in responsible posts as part of the staff of that separate branch of the Treasury which we have unanimously suggested† should be set up to specialise in "establishment" work, and to study all questions of staff, recruitment, classification, etc., in application to the several Departments of State.

Parliamentary Control

48. We cannot conclude this Part of our Report without a reference to the bearing of our enquiry upon the problem of Parliamentary Control. Our terms of reference direct us to frame our recommendations with the primary object of promoting the efficient and economical working of the public service. But we have throughout our deliberations borne in mind the fact that any action directed to this end would fail to achieve its purpose if it were to have the effect of disturbing the balance of authority between the Legislature and the Executive.

It would, we think, be generally felt that any improvement in the organisation of the Departments of State which was so marked as substantially to increase their efficiency should have as its correlative an increase in the power of the Legislature as the check upon the acts and proposals of the Executive.

49. We need scarcely say that we adhere without reserve to this view. But our duty is limited to the consideration of the present defects of departmental organisation and the suggestion of appropriate remedies. It is for Parliament to see that its own supremacy is not impaired, and we have not felt that we could properly do more than draw attention to the importance

* See paragraph 14 above, and Part II., Chapter IV., paragraph 15, p. 25.

† See Part II., Chapter I., paragraph 20, p. 21.

which attaches to certain recommendations recently made by a Parliamentary body, the Select Committee on National Expenditure, with the object of securing more effective control by Parliament over public expenditure, and to a further question arising out of these recommendations.

50. In their Seventh Report* (Session 1918), on the Form of Public Accounts, the Select Committee express the view that Estimates and Accounts prepared on the present basis are of little value for purposes of control either by Departments, the Treasury, or Parliament; and recommend a detailed scheme of revision with a view to facilitating control by making the Estimates and Accounts more significant of the nature of the expenditure proposed or recorded in them, and of the value of the returns obtained for that expenditure.

51. In their Ninth Report† (Session 1918), on the Procedure of the House, the Select Committee recommend the appointment of two, or if necessary three, Standing Committees on Estimates, who, with the assistance of a new Officer of the House, to be called the Examiner of Estimates, should consider the Estimates and report to the House any economies which they regard as desirable. In the opinion of the Select Committee "it should not be within the competence of the Committees to make any recommendations inconsistent with the policy implied in the Estimates."

52. We should hesitate to enter further upon questions of procedure which Parliament alone can examine or determine with authority, were it not that it has been definitely suggested to us that the efficiency of the public service would be improved if steps were taken to secure the continuous and well-informed interest of a Parliamentary body in the execution by each Department of the policy which Parliament has laid down.

53. It has been suggested that the appointment of a series of Standing Committees, each charged with the consideration of the activities of the Departments which cover the main divisions of the business of Government, would be conducive to this end. Any such Committees would require to be furnished with full information as to the course of administration pursued by the Departments with which they were concerned; and for this purpose it would be requisite that Ministers, as well as the officers of Departments, should appear before them to explain and defend the acts for which they were responsible.

54. It is not for us to attempt to forecast the precise procedure under which interrogations and requests for papers emanating from such Committees should be dealt with. But the particular argument in favour of some such system to which we feel justified in drawing attention is that if Parliament were furnished, through such Committees of its members, with fuller knowledge of the work of Departments, and of the objects which Ministers had in view, the officers of Departments would be encouraged to lay more stress upon constructive work in administering the services entrusted to them for the benefit of the community than upon anticipating criticism which may, in present conditions, often be based upon imperfect knowledge of the facts or the principles at issue.

CONCLUSION.

55. If the principle which we have suggested in this Part of our Report, that the business of the various Departments of Government should be distributed as far as possible according to the class of service with which they

* H.C. 98/1918.

† H.C. 121/1918.

are concerned, be accepted, the business of Government would fall into one or other of the following main divisions :—

- I.—Finance.
- II. and III.—National Defence and External Affairs.
- IV.—Research and Information.
- V.—Production (including Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries),
Transport, and Commerce.
- VI.—Employment.
- VII.—Supplies.
- VIII.—Education,
- IX.—Health.
- X.—Justice.

It does not necessarily follow that there would be only one Minister for each of these branches. Some of them would undoubtedly require more than one.

56. In concluding this Part of our Report we may summarise briefly the main principles to which we have drawn attention as follows :—

- (a) Further provision is needed in the sphere of civil government for the continuous acquisition of knowledge and the prosecution of research, in order to furnish a proper basis for policy.
- (b) The distribution of business between administrative Departments should be governed by the nature of the service which is assigned to each Department. But close regard should be paid to the necessity for co-operation between Departments in dealing with business of common interest.
- (c) In the organisation of individual Departments special importance should be attached to securing proper consideration of proposals for expenditure, unimpaired Ministerial responsibility, co-operation with advisory bodies in matters which bring Departments into contact with the public, and the extended employment of qualified women.
- (d) A more efficient public service may expose the State to the evils of bureaucracy unless the reality of Parliamentary control is so enforced as to keep pace with any improvement in departmental methods.

In making these suggestions we are aware that an efficient departmental system working in satisfactory relations with Parliament cannot be established or maintained on lines laid down in advance by any Committee of enquiry. Whatever validity may attach in the abstract to the principles which we have ventured to suggest, their practical efficacy will depend upon the zeal and discretion with which they are applied from day to day by Parliament, by Ministers, and by the officers of Departments, the living forces whose spirit is essential to any form of government that is more than a machine.