

to appoint candidates from the Civil Service list as much as we can. Some men have been kept on as temporary clerks for special duties owing to the special qualifications they have possessed. Three of these have become permanent officers since 1907. But from September to March these eight thousand candidates come up for examination. Each of these sends in a list of subjects on which he wishes to be examined, and many have to send fees. You have to acknowledge receipt, send each candidate a time-table; you have to tell him the result; and generally, with a very large proportion of the candidates, there is some correspondence, because they mark wrong subjects on the lists in their application forms, and make other mistakes; and the lists have to be sent back, and the entries corrected. We use our permanent men—even though young, they are very good—for the most responsible work; and for the more formal work we employ temporary clerks, engaging as far as possible those who have done the same work for us in previous years; so that at that time of the year we have eight or ten extra clerks employed. We take them on as the pressure increases. Occasionally we have one of our typists ill. We do not consider that a capable young clerk, whether boy or girl, ought to be kept merely typing, so if one of our typists is ill we sometimes employ a temporary typist during the period of sick-leave. Otherwise our staff is entirely made up of those taken from the Civil Service Junior Examination.

5. *The Chairman.*] Can we not get a return under these several headings for five-yearly periods, starting from 1890–91 and finishing 1911–12, which would cover a period of twenty years altogether in four five-weekly periods?—To make it fair, I should have to show the work we had to do at each period.

6. I want you to show on one side the difference in the work—the attendance at the schools during each of these five-yearly periods and the additional work cast on the Department in the same periods?—Yes. I will prepare a return under the head of the branches as we work them. I should prefer to do that rather than under the several votes. In connection with the administration of our Department, the correspondence is so manifold in its character that there is one recognized way of dealing with it all, and a junior knows what to do at once. First of all, a letter goes to one branch, and it is recorded in the branch to which it belongs. The great mass of the records are in what I have called the General Branch, but all manual and technical records are kept in the Manual and Technical Branch, all inspection and examination records are kept in the Inspection Branch, special-school records in the Special Schools Branch, and so on.

7. *Mr. Kirk.*] If a letter comes addressed to the Inspector-General, who opens it?—If it is addressed by name, then it is kept to be opened by me as a personal letter; but if it is addressed, as it ought to be, to the “Inspector-General of Schools” it may go to one branch or the other, it does not matter which; but as soon as it is opened the clerk finds out the branch to which it belongs, and it is sent there.

8. Who opens it first?—A junior opens all letters addressed in that general way.

9. Has he sufficient knowledge to decide to which branch it should go?—If he does not know, there is a superior officer near to tell him. The work is so specific that he would very soon know. If it goes to the wrong branch by mistake, it is immediately handed on to the right branch. The mass of letters coming in at one time is so great that if the separate branches did not take the letters that specially relate to them we should hardly be able to get through them in the day.

10. Under that system, then, it is possible that the person to whom the letter is addressed might never see the letter?—Yes; I might not see letters addressed to the “Inspector-General of Schools”; but the person responsible for the matter would certainly get it.

11. It might be dealt with without your knowledge?—It would be impossible to deal otherwise with, say, 80,000 letters coming in; many of them are merely formal letters, asking for copies of regulations, and so on; these letters are not sent to me.

12. *Mr. Thomson.*] A letter would come to you if addressed by name?—Yes; but that is a very undesirable thing to do if prompt treatment is wanted, because if I am away inspecting (unless I have allowed somebody to open my personal letters, which I have had to do at certain times of the year) it might follow me all round New Zealand.

13. *Mr. Wells.*] It would be physically impossible for you to read all the letters addressed to the Inspector-General of Schools?—I could not do it. As soon as a letter reaches the record clerk of the branch to which it belongs it is filed and indexed, and it is his business to see that it is acknowledged and dealt with; it is his business to bring it up until it is dealt with.

14. *The Chairman.*] Apart from matters of routine such as you mention, is there any officer whose duty it is to forward to you any letter dealing with a matter of such importance, in regard to administration, for instance, that you should know of it?—There are some matters in which the policy is well defined. It would be utterly impossible for me to deal with the whole of the matters to be dealt with by the Department if I included these. Some years ago we took a return of the letters, and they numbered 80,000. I have to advise the Minister as to policy questions, and I have to advise as to the drafting of Bills, and a great many other things, so that it would be utterly impossible for me to go into every individual case.

15. What I said was, is it possible for any question involving policy or large administration to be dealt with apart from your knowledge?—All policy questions are supposed to come to me.

16. Are you conscious of any case having been dealt with apart from you where a question of policy or a question affecting the administration of the Act was involved?—There must be cases where the policy is not a new policy. Where the policy has been decided by the Minister or by me as a question of interpretation of what the Minister has decided, then that case may be dealt with without coming to me. In all such cases it will be understood by the Secretary of Education or by the Assistant Inspector-General of Schools that these cases are to be dealt with in accordance with the precedent. If there is no distinct precedent, however, or it is doubtful whether the case comes under the precedent, they come to me, and, as a matter of fact, they do generally come to me.

17. *Mr. Kirk.*] In that case it might be possible for twenty letters, all dealing with a certain matter of policy well laid down, to be dealt with without your knowledge?—Yes.