

mation of any kind from us. We may say here, too, that we have been greatly struck with the high type, both as regards character and ability, of many of the departmental heads and those holding responsible positions in the Service with whom we have come in contact.

MAGNITUDE OF TASK.

It may not be out of place to here make some reference to the magnitude of the task upon which we have been engaged. The order of reference sets forth the matters that we were to look into, but, condensed, this means that we were to examine the whole organization and office and working methods of the unclassified Departments of the Public Service, including all the Departments except the Post Office and Railways, which are the only two Departments that are classified by statute. The total number of officials employed in the Departments that we have had to investigate is 7,115. With an inquiry so large as this it has been impossible for us, in the time at our disposal, to inquire closely into all the details of the Service, and we have therefore confined our investigations to the general principles upon which the business of the country is conducted, and have only gone so far into details as was necessary to make ourselves familiar with general working-methods. Excepting, as we have said, the Post Office and Railways, our inquiry covers the whole of the organization that deals with the business of the Dominion. We have tried to look at the whole matter from a business point of view, bearing in mind certain differences which must always exist between private businesses and the business of a country. Records of all kinds have to be kept for much longer periods in a Government Service than in any outside business, and they have therefore to be all very carefully filed away so that they can be easily referred to, no matter how far back it may be necessary to inquire. Sometimes in a Government Service it is necessary to look into records dating back to the beginning of the country. Then, many things have to be kept in much more detail than would be required from an ordinary business point of view, because of the extensive returns that are continually being asked for by members of Parliament on all sorts of unexpected points. Many of these returns require an enormous amount of work to prepare, and are of little or no value when finished; and we feel sure that if members of Parliament knew the enormous amount of labour involved in preparing some of these returns they would think twice before putting the Service to the labour, and the country to the expense, of making them up. In this connection it might not be out of place to remark that we think a permanent Parliamentary Committee should be set up to which all motions for returns by Parliament should be referred for report. In this way we think some reasonable restraint would be placed on the practice of calling for returns which, as we have indicated, often cause a great amount of work and expense to prepare and print.

FINDINGS OUTLINED.

We found many things which we consider we can say definitely are defects in the system, and in these cases we have tried to recommend definite remedies. We have also found many other points that we consider weak spots in the organization or working methods, but into which we have not had the time to inquire closely enough to speak decidedly. In these cases we are stating our views as far as we have been able to form them, and are indicating the steps that we think are necessary to make fuller inquiries into them in order to arrive at the true position.

As we have already indicated, the scope of our inquiry covers (a) the whole organization of the Public Service, and (b) its office and working methods; and it will be both more convenient and more effective to consider the report under these headings than to deal with it under the various headings set out in the order of reference. The organization can be divided into (1) the organization of the whole Service, and (2) the organization of its different Departments and branches. The office and working methods can be similarly divided into (1) as regards the whole Service, and (2) the different Departments and branches.