

## CORRESPONDENCE AND RECORDS.

57. There is still room for improvement in the treatment of correspondence in some offices. Letters are not always acknowledged or replied to promptly, references to other Departments are not followed up, and the tendency to pigeon-hole awkward questions still exists. Senior officers should pay constant attention to the correspondence and record branches. It is largely upon the way in which a Department deals with correspondence that the public judge its efficiency.

58. It is observed that sufficient protection is not afforded to Record Clerks, who are responsible for the custody of important and confidential documents. In many cases the office staff and the public have uninterrupted access to the room in which the Record Clerks work. If leakage is to be prevented, no admittance should be allowed to the record-room except by authorized officers, and, if practicable, a portion of the office should be set apart for records, and so arranged that callers, both official and private, cannot overlook the work under action.

59. With one or two exceptions, the series system has been adopted throughout the Service, and has proved efficient and economical.

## SHORTHAND-WRITERS AND TYPISTS.

60. There is still too much letter-drafting. Shorthand-writers in many Departments complained that they did not get much shorthand work. It is no saving of time or labour to draft letters and hand them to typists to be copied. In most offices, carbon paper could replace typists where dictating is not practicable.

61. In nearly all Departments shorthand-writers and typists are now grouped under an efficient controlling officer. This makes for efficiency and economy, and is a distinct improvement upon the old system of allotting individual shorthand-writers to some Heads and sections.

## SAMOAN YOUTHS.

62. At the instance of the Samoan Government, arrangements have been made to temporarily employ young Samoans of promise in the Lands and Survey Department, with the object of perfecting their knowledge of the surveying profession. In addition, two Samoan boys have been employed as clerks in the same Department.

## FEES CHARGEABLE FOR SERVICES BY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

63. During the course of inspection it was observed that, notwithstanding the higher cost of working the Public Service, fees for many services had not been increased for years, and it is suggested that it should be taken into consideration whether fees for services, such as enabling traders to collect their debts, inspection of machinery, and many others, should not be increased sufficiently to enable the services to be performed without loss.

64. In the Land and Deeds Department, for example, it came under notice that there is a fixed fee of 5s. for depositing plans, irrespective of the area or value of the land to be dealt with. It was stated by a responsible officer that the smallest transaction would cost Government not less than 10s. to £1, even the simplest examination occupying one or two hours. For the fee of 5s. there had been occasions when the cost to Government for examination amounted to as much as £500. Typical instances quoted were: The owner of a small piece of land sold a section for £30, and another for £12, for which the fee for examination was 5s. Another estate of 40,000 acres took two months to check, for which no more than 5s. was paid. It is difficult to estimate exactly what the loss is on this class of work, but, roughly, it appears to cost twelve times as much as is received in fees.

## ACCOUNT-KEEPING.

65. Attention is again directed to the necessity for each Department of the Public Service producing an annual balance-sheet, showing the whole operations of the Department and making due allowances for overhead charges. The position at present is that the trading Departments publish a balance-sheet, which affords an intelligible review of the business undertaken and the results, and it goes