

that a maximum age should be fixed for all officers in Class I. We would suggest twenty-five years of age. If an officer did not show sufficient merit to be selected from Class I to go into Class II before he reached the age of twenty-five years he should be required to leave the Service. It is better for the State and better for the individual that this should be so. Many young fellows start their work in life in a line that is not suited to them. If they remain in it they will be failures for life, but if they pass out of it early in life they will probably get into something else which will suit them and perhaps be successful."

The extended period of probation will enable the position to be more carefully reviewed by controlling officers and Permanent Heads. The matter is one of serious moment. Controlling officers are inclined to regard the termination of the services of an officer for incompetence after a period of years in the Public Service as a case of hardship. After personal association with an officer for a number of years it is very difficult for a controlling officer to raise the question of the unsuitability of the officer for whom he may have the highest personal regard. Nothing creates greater discontent in the mind of a promising young officer than to observe that the inefficiency and incompetency of a senior (and more highly paid) officer is being carefully overlooked.

#### PROMOTION SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION.

The provisions of the Public Service Act require that both "fitness" and "seniority" are to be taken into account in determining whether an officer is worthy of promotion. Promotion by merit, however, and by merit alone, is regarded by the Commissioners as the only satisfactory means of ensuring that men of ability receive the benefit to which they are entitled. The general practice has been to subordinate "seniority" to "fitness," but in actual practice it has been found that the human characteristic of sympathy to an old officer has in some cases led to the question being raised as to whether the senior officer could "carry out the duties," not whether he was the best entitled by merit. Efficiency can never be maintained in the Service unless "merit" is regarded as the determining factor in all cases.

While an officer on first appointment is required to undergo a probationary period, no such condition exists in respect of an officer promoted to a higher position. Although an officer may appear to be worthy in every respect of promotion, it sometimes happens that when called upon to perform duties of a more onerous character he does not exhibit those qualities necessary to meet requirements. The only method at present of dealing with such an officer is to treat him as incompetent or inefficient, and proceed on the elaborate lines of an inquiry in terms of the Public Service Act. In a private concern if an employee does not give satisfaction there is no hesitancy in disrating him. In the Service, however, there is a natural reluctance, partly from long association, on the part of controlling officers to bring matters of this kind under notice, with the result in some cases inefficient officers are retained in responsible positions. We are of opinion that a great improvement would result if all officers on promotion were required to give proof by practical means showing that their promotion was fully *merited*, and, if not, that they should revert to their former status.

#### TRAINING OF PROFESSIONAL CADETS.

Hitherto the period of training for Professional Cadets in the Public Works Department has been four years. Recently it was decided that the period should be extended to six years, and that the training given during that time should consist of—(a) Approximately one year in the office, engaged in draughting, &c.; (b) two years on actual engineering-works; (c) two years in the field on survey or construction work; (d) one year's workshop training.

Those cadets who cannot be stationed at Christchurch in accordance with the ordinary work of the Department will be granted the necessary leave to enable them to attend Canterbury College for two sessions, when they will be expected to take a complete course of engineering subjects.

Cadets who have gained the degree of Bachelor of Engineering of the University of New Zealand, or an equivalent qualification, will be paid at the salary for fourth-year cadets, and will not be required to take further workshop training. Cadets who have gained the diploma of Associateship of Canterbury College will commence as