

EFFICIENCY OF THE SERVICE.

It is satisfactory to be able to report that notwithstanding a certain amount of disorganization consequent upon the exodus of a considerable number of officers holding responsible positions, and despite the curtailment due to present economic conditions, the general standard of efficiency has been well maintained, and the loyalty with which the staffs have faced the existing situation has been most commendable. During times of financial stringency a more exacting control and restriction over departmental activities must be exercised, but the spirit of co-operation with which all Departments have striven to meet the present difficult situation has contributed materially to the smooth working of the administrative machine as a co-ordinate whole. A typical example of this co-operation may be instanced in the manner in which the great mass of detailed clerical work that was involved in connection with the initiation of the unemployment scheme was undertaken. Through making use of staffs that were available in consequence of a slackening-off of ordinary business in other Departments, particularly the Railway and the Post and Telegraph Departments, the whole of this work was carried out without it being necessary to make any additional appointments.

EXPANSION OF THE SERVICE, AND ECONOMIES.

The popular idea is that in most matters pertaining to public administration greater attention is given to political than to economic considerations, but it should be manifest on reflection that the great expansion which has taken place in the functions of Government in the last few decades and the creation of Departments to undertake the extended administrative tasks imposed by Parliament has not been a chance development, or purely a matter of political expediency, but has been a steady process of evolution. "From being concerned with a limited number of specific functions, such as defence, tax-gathering, and the administration of justice, the functions of the Public Service have been extended to cover the protection of the life and health of the industrial workers, public health and the housing of the people, education, child welfare, the minimizing of social conflict, the salvaging of the derelicts of society, the transfer and exchange of labour, the promotion of trade, the aiding of commerce and scientific research, the 'numbering of the people,' the development of afforestation and agriculture, the organization of transport, and a score of others. From being a thing more or less alien to the life of the average citizen it has become a thing that touches every member of the community, both in his public and private life." A breaking-down or pruning of this complex social structure cannot be effected by a mere "stroke of the pen" without involving considerable waste of past effort in the loss of valuable data, and much loss of efficiency through the disorganization of established routine. Any curtailment must be preceded by a careful review of all the surrounding circumstances, to ensure that the loss likely to be involved will not outweigh the immediate savings. It is recognized that in a period of intense depression financial considerations to a large extent must dominate the situation, but as in private enterprise, for the efficient conduct of business, it is desirable to keep a trained staff intact, so it is with Government Departments. Continuity is an important factor, and it is not always the wisest course, nor does it always pay, to dispense with employees in a wholesale way because of a temporary lull in the volume of business. Wherever opportunity has offered, however, or wherever an economy has been practicable, retrenchment has been effected. During the year ended the 31st March last 117 classified officers under the control of the Commissioner were retired or retrenched, and to date the total number of permanent officers so dealt with is 289 officers.

The economies effected, through curtailment of services and falling-off in the volume of business, by retirement and non-replacement of officers, both permanent and temporary, amount to a considerable sum, as shown by the following table. Further savings brought about by reductions in allowances and other staff adjustments are also shown.