

VOTE—AUDIT DEPARTMENT.

561. The expenditure of this Department has increased considerably since 1914–15, but the increase has been due to the increased responsibilities of the Department occasioned by the growth of local-government activities and the growth of public expenditure. The following statement will indicate the administrative expenditure in 1914–15 and 1930–31 respectively :—

1914–15.			1930–31.		
Salaries.	Other Charges.	Total.	Salaries.	Other Charges.	Total.
£ 15,732	£ 2,575	£ 18,307	£ 53,072	£ 7,562	£ 60,634
Less credits	..	10,638	Less credits	..	32,861
		£7,669			£27,773

562. The staff in 1914–15 numbered 63, and in 1930–31 it was 165.

563. The reorganization of Government accounts on a commercial basis and the institution of Stores Audit control have been responsible for a substantial increase in the work of the Audit Office. We cannot recommend any specific economies in the vote, but note that the charge made for examination of the accounts and balance-sheets of certain Government Departments does not cover the cost involved. **We consider that the full charge should be recouped from the Departments concerned, and recommend that in future this be done.** The Departments concerned are the Government Life Insurance Office, National Provident Fund, Public Service Superannuation Fund, Public Trust Office, and Native Trust Office. This should result in an increase in the credits of at least £450 per annum—virtually a saving.

Saving, £450.

564. We consider that any further reduction in the vote of this Department is not warranted in view of the increased responsibilities attaching to the audit of public expenditure, including local-body expenditure.

VOTE—PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE.

565. The expenditure of this Department in 1914–15 and 1930–31 is shown hereunder :—

1914–15.			1930–31.		
Salaries.	Other Charges.	Total.	Salaries.	Other Charges.	Total.
£ 2,812	£ 4,999	£ 7,811	£ 4,787	£ 2,353	£ 7,140

566. The staff of the Office in 1914–15 numbered sixteen and in 1930–31 the number was nineteen. This number is not a true indication of the normal staff, as officers are frequently detailed for relief work in other Departments.

567. In connection with the various items on the vote we wish to report as follows :—

Appeal Board Expenses.

Item—Fees to Chairman, £100.

Expenses in connection with the hearing of Appeals, £100.

568. At present appeals in regard to the regrading, promotion, and dismissal of officers in the various Departments of State are considered by the respective Appeal Boards without any charge to the appellants. **We consider that, as the Appeal Boards have been established at the public expense for the benefit of the members of the Public Service, a fee of 10s. 6d. should be charged for each appeal, to be refunded when the appellant is successful.** This, we are convinced, would result in a considerable reduction in the number of appeals, especially in regrading years. The charging of such a fee would also reduce the net cost of the various Appeal Boards each year.