

whatever functions or services the people choose through their parliamentary representatives and to carry these out at the least cost and with the best effect.

Public service methods certainly involve much formality in the sense of form-filling; yet this springs, at least in part, from the necessities of administration in any large enterprise whether public or private. Whenever, in private business, large blocks of work are handled by large blocks of staff, the concern soon introduces standardised methods and proceeds by rules and regulations. In this sense, there are more 'bureaucrats' in the City of London or in Collyer Quay, than in Whitehall or Empress Place. It is the peculiar position which the Public Service occupies in relation to the Legislative Assembly and the community as a whole that gives rise to the formalities so often seized on in the press or by public critics of the Service.

*Public Administration and Private Business.*—As its critics are apt to measure the Public Service against the standards of private business, let us compare the necessities of the Public Service with the opportunities of the private business.

Government business, unlike private business, is organised on the principle of ministerial responsibility. The Minister is responsible and may be questioned on, or criticised for, every act of his department. The public servant is, therefore, a trustee and must weigh his decisions and actions in the light of this responsibility. He works to the glaring light of publicity, close public scrutiny and often partisan criticism. He is preoccupied with considerations of equity and public justice. He must work out reasons for decisions, which his Minister may have later to defend, paying strict heed to precedent. Hence the need for paper work or red tape; for recording, minuting, reporting, checking and filing. Also, he must be consistent; that is, he must preserve a reasoned relation between previous and current decisions, and between decisions in one class of cases and decisions in another class of cases.

The public would be the first to protest at rough and ready administration. Yet to meet the present-day needs, a quicker handling of government business is required. Decisions must be given promptly as well as correctly. The old idea that nothing positive flows from government—if it ever were right—is certainly wrong to-day, and the modern public service must be alive with initiative and constructive ability and be fully enterprising within the limits of policy laid down. On the other hand, the public servant must be conceded the human tendency to occasional error.

The Service will grow into this new attitude by experience and experimentation. It will have 'to combine vigour with tact, imagination with efficiency, courage with realism' (Political Quarterly, London, Vol. 15, page 95). Senior officers should make special efforts to encourage young officers to question constructively the practice of the department and to propose improvements in methods and procedure.

Private business, on the other hand, is governed more by expediency and less by consistency. A head of a private business can decide how