

We in Canada have inherited a splendid tradition. We are fortunate too, in my judgment, in the quality of our civil servants. I believe that the average department of government is as well run as the average private undertaking of comparable complexity and extent. This is certainly not to say that there is not room for improvement.

Those who do business with government often grow impatient and critical at having to comply with complicated and ponderous procedures which sometimes involve irksome delays - and in which they see no sense. This is the familiar problem of government red-tape. In some degree this will always be with us, for such conditions have normally been prescribed to serve some solid public purpose. In government employment, for example, the regulations which govern the process of appointment and advancement are designed to prevent improper pressures and safeguard the merit system. Nevertheless, there is an undoubted tendency in all large organizations - perhaps government especially - toward the proliferation of regulations. And this calls for a process of constant scrutiny and adaptation.

Some of our difficulties can, I believe, be overcome or at least alleviated, within present laws by administrative improvements in the Commission and in the departments. And a good deal is being done as we go along.

But there are other problems which require more fundamental treatment. For the fact is the Civil Service Act was drafted, and well drafted, in conditions quite different, for an essentially negative and defensive purpose - the elimination and prevention of patronage. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that forty years later the Act is not in all particulars adequate to the larger positive needs of our public personnel administration.

It is for this reason that the Government has asked the Civil Service Commissioners to review the whole fabric of law and regulation under which Federal personnel administration is presently conducted and the role of the Commission itself. When we have completed our studies we are to submit to Government a report with our recommendations for a régime more suitable to modern conditions.

On this task my colleagues and I are now engaged. In it we shall have and need the assistance and suggestions of government departments who are our customers on the side of management. We shall also have, from the employees' point of view, the help of the staff associations of the Civil Service.

One of our main objectives in these endeavours, as I see it now, will be to devise means by which the Government Service can increase its efficiency of operation without jeopardizing the merit system - to improve personnel administration in the Civil Service along lines which accord with the best modern practice and with due regard to the rights and interests of the employees.