

work will get behind. I can't refer it to my secretary for he also is busy. No use sending it to the Marine Department for only the smallest part of it refers to them. And as to this business about Manitoba schools and the discussions in the House it isn't reasonable to suppose that the officers who are nearest to the information desired are going to drop their work and hunt through statute books and files of "Hansard" to pick out what he wants."

"Why not tell him the information is not available?"

"But some of it, I fancy, is easily available, and just how difficult it would be to collect it all, I don't know."

"Tell him to apply to the proper official for each bit of information he wants."

"Who are these officials? I confess, I'm not quite sure. Who would look up these 'Hansard' reports, for instance? And if I don't know, how can I expect this outsider to know?"

"But such a request is wholly unreasonable," said *The Civilian* man. "It would be just as fair for the party to send to a tailor and ask for a suit of clothes. There must be some sort of definiteness about every request."

"Very true; yet even in this request there is something in which we might be able to help him. If I could give him the dates of the discussions in the House he could look them up in his public library. But, even if we couldn't do this research work for him, we ought to be able to get the rest of the information somehow. But who is to collect it amongst the departments?"

After a pause the official went on.

"That idea of the telephone people of having one wire for 'Information' is a good one. It seems to me there ought to be some such office here on the Hill. Because this letter, though a rather extreme case, is not by any means unique. Often, in

talking with men in other departments, I've come across instances like this. Men who have been brought into contact with a government department in any way are pretty sure to refer to that department for anything of a public nature that they may happen to want. The immigrant thinks that the immigration officials can tell him anything he wants to know and procure for him anything he wants to get. A man who has written to the Experimental Farm about making a drain or killing out a weed will write to the same people for information as to the Shah of Persia, the causes of earthquakes or anything else that is beyond his range. I was told a story by a tree-planting inspector in the West. He was breaking in a new man to take his district and the very first farm they visited was in trouble not over the shelter-belt of trees but over a sick baby. It happened that this inspector had raised quite a family, and so he was able to doctor the baby and to give the mother good advice as to its future care. He solemnly warned his apprentice that in their business they were supposed to be able to give information and advice about every thing. That's the way it ought to be on this Hill. There ought to be some man to whom could be referred such letters as this, a man of wide knowledge and easy temper, and with a liking for work. He could establish good relations with all the departments and could soon learn the sources of much of the information correspondents ask for.

"Such a bureau," continued the speaker, "would be of great help to the public. How can the ordinary citizen know of our arbitrary divisions into departments and offices? How is he to know, for instance, that the insurance branch is in Finance and the annuities branch in Trade and Commerce? How many men even in the government employ know just which services of the Marine and Fisheries Department