

THE CIVILIAN

DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF THE CIVIL SERVICE OF CANADA

A Farewell Contribution

From Griffenhagen and Associates, Ltd.

Problems of organization did not become a field for professional endeavor until human enterprise, of the sort that is usually referred to as "business", took on such large proportions that it was forced to depend on the co-ordination of the activities of many persons for its success. With this growth of industrial concerns it became necessary to develop means through which central policies and control could be transmitted from the management to the various branches and individuals making up the organization. It also became impracticable to handle transactions by decisions reached in individual cases as opportunities for personal contacts became fewer, and thus standards, routines, —the forerunners of so-called "red-tape" — made their appearance. As part of the same development, a distinction grew up between "line" functions — those having to do with the making and carrying out of decisions as required by the current day to day operation of the organization as a working mechanism; and "staff" functions — those involved in providing specialized information, counsel, and service for the guidance and aid of "line" officers. Likewise, certain old time methods of procedure broke down under the test of volume, and hence questions of system, labor saving devices, wholesale record keeping, and related questions, took on great importance. This led to the development of the profession of industrial engineer, to serve in the solution of problems of organization, management, and method in their general and in their specific aspects.

The tendency of recent years in the realm of political science toward an

expansion and extension of the functions and activities of the government, as interested in the greatest good of the greatest number in the community, has caused a corresponding enlargement of the organization of governmental bodies and has introduced numerous problems of the exact kinds that privately-controlled businesses have had to cope with and have in many respects solved. It has been a natural development that those engaged in the field of industrial engineering should be called in from time to time to assist public officials in the application of those principles and methods that have been developed in the field of industry under the pressure and stress of competition.

The work now being done in our federal service under the direction of a Sub-Committee of the Council on Reorganization and Efficiency is an example of the relation of the work of the industrial engineer to certain technical problems of public administration.

At numerous times in the past, and more and more frequently since the war the need for economy in the conduct of government business has been expressed. Some such expressions have been in the form of the usual attacks of legislators coming to office with preconceived opinions as to the competency of the whole body of civil servants. Others have been the more or less academic admonitions of reformers without interest in the details of government routine.

Several investigations have been made some constructive and some purely critical in purpose. The brief but scholarly study by Sir George Murray into some of the general

aspects of existing administrative and financial policy was one of the former type.

But no solution can come of an "investigation". Nor is there much of practical value in recommendations that deal only in general principle and re-affirm what is generally agreed to by all public spirited citizens. Reports full of truths which are sound but not in form to bring their practical application any nearer than before are not what is needed. It is rather a systematic and businesslike consideration of the exact workings of the operating departments, including the details of their internal organization and of their routine methods of procedure and the concurrent development and installation of improvements based on analogy with the practice of progressively managed business concerns. Nor should the programme fail to cover the central problems of administration that confront the government in its capacity as manager of all departmental operations, such as the distribution of governmental activities and services among the various departments the basis, method, and technique of central expenditure control; and the standardization of such routine operations as the handling of correspondence, files, and similar matters common to all departments.

To assist it in carrying through such a programme the government has seen fit to follow the precedent established by private business and the most progressive governmental bodies and has retained a group of engineers who have been engaged continuously in just such work for years. It has chosen a firm incorporated under the Dominion laws, operating from offices in the principal cities in Canada, and