

eleven in the lower grade (300*l.*-500*l.*) and three above; in the Science Museum the numbers are three and six; and in the Geological Survey twenty and ten. In the Natural History Museum there are thirty-two graded up to 500*l.* a year as against eight above. The position in the latter is so bad that there has been a constant leakage for many years from its highly specialised staff into university and other appointments, the salaries in which exceed those paid in the museum. There is no abundant field of men with private incomes and natural history tastes upon which to draw. The fact that only about one man in four or five who join the staff can hope ever to receive an income above 500*l.* a year prevents any of the best students of universities from entering, while the museum, as the basal institute of several sciences in this country, demands the services of the best men, and of the best men only. The Natural History Museum is, furthermore, out of date in that, while the sciences it represents have advanced, it has taken little account of these advances; its staff has all the same duties as it had twenty or thirty years ago, and, still numbering the same, can undertake new duties only by neglecting older ones. It was never intended to be a museum solely for education and amusement, but the policy pursued in regard to it in the last twenty years has neglected its other sides in respect to research, and its assistants have become more and more the cataloguers, arrangers, and cleaners-up of specimens. The staff less and less takes part in the proceedings of scientific societies because it cannot afford to belong to them.

May I suggest that the pay, position, and grading of the staffs in all the above four institutions should be those of the Home Civil Service, and that the numbers in different grades should be the same as in that Service? The prestige and position of the Civil Service are such that it is an object of ambition to the boy, and no lower position will attract the picked students of science.

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THE timely leading article which appeared in NATURE of March 11 raises the very important question of the future administration of the national museums and art galleries of this country. With the main recommendations of the article I am in complete agreement. There is little doubt that the administration of the national museums and art galleries on federal lines from a central Government Department would make for greater efficiency and economy, obviate considerable overlapping, and lead to the fuller use and development of the unique collections housed within their walls. The Department of Scientific and Industrial Research has already assumed control of the Museum of Practical Geology, and the machinery, therefore, for the administration of the whole of our national museums is already in existence, and only requires adapting and expanding.

Such a central Museum Department could be of the greatest service to the provincial museums and art galleries of the country if extended to include them and link them all up in one comprehensive scheme. At present the provincial museums are isolated. There is a lack of co-ordination and co-operation in their work, and they need the advice and assistance of a central body to help them in their development. The national museums between them cover the whole field of museum activities, and their amalgamation into a federal scheme would provide a Department able to deal with any branch of museum work, and to render invaluable assistance to the provincial and private museums throughout the country.

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The National Gallery and the Tate Gallery would supply the nucleus for fine arts, the British Museum (Bloomsbury) for pre-history, anthropology, antiquities, and numismatics, the British Museum (Natural History) for natural history, the Victoria and Albert Museum for industrial and applied art, and the Imperial Science Museum for applied and technological science.

It is sufficient to indicate one or two ways in which the assistance of such a Department would be of the highest value:

(1) In the development of a comprehensive system of circulating collections for all branches on the same lines as is now done for industrial art by the Victoria and Albert Museum. (2) The provision of a staff of experts in all branches who could be placed at the service of museums for specialist work on collections. (3) The provision and circulation of approved casts of important and rare specimens. (4) The standardisation of museum cases and fittings to allow of their production on a cheaper and more efficient scale.

A Department such as I have indicated, linking up all the museums into one comprehensive scheme, would lead to the co-ordination of museum work throughout the country. The resources of the museums for each and every available line of research would be accurately known. The provincial and private museums would benefit enormously by having their collections accurately identified and labelled, and be able to utilise and develop their collections to the best advantage. By means of the circulating collections the vast resources of duplicate and reserve material in the national museums would be rendered available and accessible to the nation at large.

The cost of such a scheme would not necessitate an undue burden being placed on the State.

(1) The Government museums are already provided for by direct appropriations. The extension of their work on the lines I have indicated would necessitate larger staffs, but the labours of each expert would not then be rigidly confined to the one museum to which he was primarily attached. While the plan would require organisation and co-operation, it does not seem to involve any drastic change in the present management or governance of such museums.

(2) The public museums of the country could remain, as at present, under the control of the local governing bodies, and their financial resources be provided, as now, by the levy of a rate.

(3) Private museums would need financial assistance from the State, and this might be given in the form of grants-in-aid based on the amount of money provided by the resources of such museums.

The institution of a central Government Department would naturally necessitate Government control and inspection of museums, but such control, wisely and judiciously exercised, would stimulate their development. The Department should clearly recognise that its function would be to help and advise museums, not to hinder them by the imposition of irksome regulations. Museums should be encouraged to preserve their individuality and to develop along their own lines.

It is, perhaps, scarcely necessary to add that a central Department should have as its chief executive officers men trained in the various branches of museum work, whose very training and experience would give them the necessary knowledge to deal sympathetically with questions of museum administration, and to foster that spirit of research which is fundamental to the proper development of museums.

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