

# THE CIVILIAN

VOL. VIII.

OCTOBER 1, 1915.

No. 12

## Address on the Civil Service Act of Canada

Address on "The Operation of the Canadian Civil Service Act," delivered by Mr. William Foran, Secretary of the Civil Service Commission of Canada, at the Convention of the National Assembly of Civil Service Commissions, held at Los Angeles, Cal., June 16, 1915.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: Allow me in the first place to thank you in the name of the Civil Service Commission of Canada for the privilege you have accorded us of becoming members of the National Assembly of Civil Service Commissions. We have observed with a great deal of interest and pleasure the splendid work you are doing for the efficient administration of public affairs in this country, and we feel that it will be a distinct advantage to our commission to be associated with a body of men who devote the time and labour that you do to the cause of civil service reform.

I am afraid that the esteemed secretary of the assembly, who I regret to observe is not present, has unwittingly done me an injustice. I was somewhat surprised, before I had formally accepted the invitation to attend the convention, to receive the first edition of your programme, and to find that I was down on it for an address on the Canadian Civil Service. In Canada, we have two Civil Service Commissioners. Unfortunately, neither of these gentlemen found it possible to be present at this convention, much to their regret.

The delivering of public addresses is the prerogative solely of the commissioners; at least, I have so regarded it. The privilege of the secretary is to do a little hard work and occasionally to explain the provisions of the Civil Service law. Therefore, in writing to Mr. Doyle, I told him that the commissioners had decided that I was to attend this convention, and that I would hold myself ready to give the delegates what I would call a "practical talk on the operation of the Civil Service law in Canada," and that is what I propose to do to-day.

If I were to attempt to recount the various steps that have been taken in Canada to establish a measure of the merit system, I should greatly exceed the time which I feel is at my disposal this afternoon. I might tell you, for example, that as far back as 1868 a commission, appointed by the Government of the day to investigate conditions in the public service, reported in favour of competitive examinations for appointment thereto, having in mind, of course, the progress that had been made in England up to that date in connection with appointments to the public service on that basis.

Now, it may seem somewhat paradoxical to say that there was no division of public sentiment in Canada in regard to the wisdom and necessity of civil service reform, and in the same breath to state that it was forty years later before a measure of civil service reform was adopted. That, however, is the fact. While I repeat there