

THE CIVILIAN

DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF THE CIVIL SERVICE OF CANADA

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Where Ignorance is Bliss

Two recent appointments to superior positions in the Service have excited protests from the organizations of two of the greatest departments in the Federal Government,—the Customs and Post Office. The appointments to which objection has been taken are those of Col. Carey to the Collectorship at Vancouver and Alphonse Payette to the Postmasterhip at Hull. Both of these appointees are outsiders without any experience in the work they have been hired to supervise.

The Customs service has some 3,000 members of from one to forty years' official experience — years spent, in many cases, in anxious weary waiting for the long hoped-for opportunity to make use in an executive capacity of their stored up departmental knowledge and for the financial benefits due and long overdue as a reward of application to duty.

The Postal service has many more thousands likewise wearily waiting for the just rewards of meritorious service. These appointments, insofar as merit in public ownership is concerned, have been greeted with unqualified condemnation by all those who have thus far expressed an opinion. Comparison has been made between them and certain patronage appointments made in the winter of 1918.

It is well to have an exact understanding of the facts of these cases and an effort will be made to set forth the matter clearly.

Vancouver Collectorship

First in regard to the Vancouver appointments: The Customs Department wrote to the Commission on September 5 requesting that the position of collector be thrown open to the wide world for competition. On September 15 the Commission wrote to the Department asking why this position was to be thrown open to competition and if there were no one in the Vancouver office competent to fill the position by promotion. On September 16 the Department wrote the Commission stating that Mr. C. A. Worsnop, the acting collector, was 61 years of age and therefore it was desirable to have an open competition. On September 17 the Commission asked the Department if it was to understand that the age of Mr. Worsnop unqualified him for promotion. On the same day the Department replied that on account of his years Mr. Worsnop could act for but a few years and therefore was not considered eligible. On September 18 the Commission replied that age should not be considered a barrier in this case and cited the promotions in Winnipeg of Mr. Allen and in Walkerville of Mr. Baillie, both of whom were well over 60 years of age, and again asked the Department for a definite reply to its request as to the eligibility of other members of the Vancouver staff. On September 20 the Department replied enclosing copies of the inspector's report upon which the Department based its decision not to recommend Mr. Worsnop for promotion. On September 24 the Commission again notified the

Department that its previous request had not been answered and again asked for a definite statement as to the eligibility of any other officer in the port. On October 9 the Department replied that an application had been received from Mr. Munn, who was considered qualified, but that as he was inspector for the district, his promotion could not be considered as that of an officer of the port. Mr. Birmingham was also considered worthy of promotion but he was especially fitted for the duties he was then performing. Therefore the Department recommended that the position be thrown open to competition and expressed its hope that, as the previous incumbent of the position had been a returned soldier, the new appointee should also be a returned soldier.

This failure of the Department to recommend any man for promotion to the position left the Civil Service Commission no alternative, under the Act of 1918, which was then in force, but to accede to the request of the Department and throw the position open. (Under the Act of 1919 the initiative rests with the Commission rather than the Department, and the recurrence of such an evasion of the merit principle is now legally impossible.) We wish the Commission had gone sufficiently out of its letter-of-the-law path to suggest to the Department the recommendation of a qualified employee from some other, even if far distant, port. We are sure that the protests which will be made against the bringing in of a man from the "outside" who knows nothing of the