

THE CIVILIAN

Devoted to the interests of the Civil Service
of Canada.

Subscription \$1.00 a year;
Single copies 5 cents.

Advertising rates are graded according to
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addressed to

THE EDITORS,
THE CIVILIAN,
P. O. Box 484, Ottawa

Communications on any subject of interest
to the Civil Service are invited and will
receive careful consideration.

Ottawa, March 21, 1913

SECRECY VERSUS PUBLICITY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE COM- MISSION.

To, the Editors of *The Civilian*:

In your attack on the Civil Service Commissioners, for not following the procedure of the Auditor-General and publishing full details of cases where a dispute has occurred with the departments, you are not quite as well informed as usual. To begin with, the Auditor-General does *not* publish any such correspondence as you mention, except in quite exceptional cases. Suppose I am sent out on a mission by my department and my expense bill seems too high. The Auditor-General points out the apparent overcharge and the matter is either explained or adjusted. But none of this correspondence appears in his report *save only when the department will neither explain nor adjust the matter*. In that case it appears because there is express provision in the Audit Act which requires the Auditor-General to publish full details. In the case of the Civil Service Commission the matter stands on an altogether different basis. The matters in dispute between the departments and the Commissioners have not to do with such tangible considerations as dollars and cents but with such comparatively intangible considerations as the personal fitness of men and women for specific positions. It is a

very different thing to discuss a disputed account in print and a disputed promotion. The slightest reflection will show that in the latter case there may be many circumstances that cannot be printed notwithstanding that they constitute real issues. Even if it were advisable to do so in the public interest from one standpoint it would be inadvisable from another, and it would shockingly unfair to the individuals concerned—especially to the very individuals who were being passed over in the promotion in question. This fact is recognized in all Civil Service Acts the world over by the exclusion of any such provision as that referred to in the Audit Act, and in my opinion this exclusion is eminently proper. There should be, of course, as there doubtless is, a full record kept of all sides of the issues in disputes between the Commissioners and the departments. These records should be available should there ever be occasion to institute enquiries into the workings of the present system—as they were for instance to Sir George Murray—but that they should be published annually and distributed broadcast is altogether an impractical suggestion.

JUSTICE.

It is due that the editors subject the foregoing letter, received from a well-known civil servant, to a careful scrutiny. In the first place we desire to say that our article a fortnight ago was not intended to be an attack but rather a discussion from our point of view, which is that the service and the public should be favoured with more information from the Civil Service Commissioners. We pass the question of terms, however, as unimportant. The second point in the letter refers to the policy of the Auditor-General's Department in regard to publishing particulars as to difference of opinion in the matter of account which come under audit. From enquiries made, we learn that the policy is *not* to publish correspondence relating to matters that may be called local, that is, as affecting one individual or one department. It is the policy of the department, however, to publish the story of questions involving principles of general application whether the department gains its point or is overruled by the Treasury Board or the Justice Department. We will not labour this point either, for we consider it also unimportant, and are