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NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

AN EFFICIENT CIVIL SERVICE

The report on the organization of the public service of Canada, made on behalf of the Dominion Government by Sir George Murray, indicates that we have considerable improvements to make in our national service. For the creation and maintenance of an efficient civil service, Sir George states that three essential conditions are required:—

"(1) The best material in the country must be attracted into it and induced to remain there.

"(2) To this end the service must be so regulated as to provide a permanent career, in which promotion will depend on individual merit exhibited in the daily performance of duty.

"(3) It follows from this that the mutual relations of Ministers and civil servants alike must be conducted with a loyal and single-minded devotion to the public service, from which all considerations dependent on the political views of individuals should be wholly excluded.

"Whether and how far it is possible to realize these conditions," he adds, "it is not for me to say, but I feel confident that until they are realized the public service will not be such as the Dominion is entitled to expect or such as is essential for the proper transaction of its business."

In plain words, we must take the civil service out of politics, and that is a big, although imperative task. The best material of the country has not always been attracted to Ottawa, and when it has been, it has not always been induced to remain there. Poor remuneration and the knowledge that promotion will not always

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depend on individual merit shown in the daily duties, has caused many men who would be valuable in the civil service to seek careers elsewhere, both to their and their employers' advantage. The civil service in Canada is likely to remain in a more or less thick political atmosphere for many years to come, but there is no reason why a beginning cannot be made to build up a service based on the foundations indicated by Sir George Murray.

His excellent report deals with the methods employed in the transaction of public business and the control of appropriations and expenditure. Sir George suggests that the estimates are subjected to a somewhat cursory examination, owing to pressure of time, and that their inspection is directed rather to the totals of the votes than to the details. He thinks that instead of the oral discussions respecting estimates by the Ministers in Council, effective control can be secured only by persistent criticism of details carried on by written correspondence in the first instance, and under conditions which permit of a thorough examination of the proposals.

If this idea is carried out, a small effort will have been made to take part of the service out of politics. Sir George also suggests the abolition of the Treasury Board. Their small duties, he thinks, could be discharged by the various departments concerned, and their more important duties under the Bank and similar acts could be equally well discharged by the Minister of Finance.

The report also deals with the administrative methods and operations of the chief spending departments, and generally with the manner in which the public business of the Dominion is administered. Sir