

But, notwithstanding the value of some of the provisions of the Civil Service Act, I am persuaded that practically it works a good deal of mischief, more than enough to neutralize all the good it is capable of. I have observed its workings pretty closely since Confederation, and the conviction has been forced upon me, that the law has a tendency to make the employees feel that inefficiency is about as likely to lead to promotion as efficiency. Annual increments of salary and eligibility for promotion when established by law, and without reference to ability or merit, have, I think, a decided tendency to increase that feeling. That being the case, they not unnaturally become indifferent. Of course, I speak in general terms. There are many honourable exceptions. There are clerks in this Department who take as warm an interest in their work, and as much pride in having it promptly and well done, as any men can possibly do.

With certain reservations as to the character of the examination, I am of opinion that competitive examinations for first entrance to the Service would effect much good. If such examinations merely referred to educational acquirements they would be of little value. To be useful they should relate to some specific object or objects in connection with the proposed Service.

There are qualifications essential to all branches of the Civil Service, and there are qualifications peculiarly necessary to certain branches of the Service, all of which may be fairly tested by examination. But there are also qualities which every member of the Civil Service should possess, the existence or absence of which no system of examination can test. They can only be determined by personal acquaintance and probationary employment. Among these qualities, may be mentioned honesty, sobriety and application. Nevertheless, the qualities which may be tested by examinations properly conducted bear a large proportion to the whole, and hence I infer that a system of examination combined with probationary employment and with due precautions for ascertaining the physical and moral character and personal habits of the candidates would work a most beneficial influence on the Service, and may at the same time be made conducive to economy.

The service of the Government ought to command a higher average ability at a lower cost than the same average can be had for by private employers, banks or other corporations. The Civil Service has many considerations to recommend it. It is respectable; it is permanent during good behaviour; it is not, except in some exceptional cases, over-laborious; the pay is sure; it is not probable that the employes will ever be affected by depression of trade or commercial fluctuations; and as now arranged, the Civil servant who performs his work with reasonable efficiency during the vigour of his life, may retire in his old age on an income sufficient for all reasonable necessities. On all these points the Civil Service offers decided advantages over private employment.

But in order to avail of these advantages, certain conditions are necessary. One condition is a reasonable certainty that merit will secure promotion as vacancies occur. The converse of this is equally necessary—that promotion cannot be had without merit.

If the employes could be made to *feel* that these conditions had assumed a substantial form, I am confident there would be an immediate and decided improvement. And if the same feeling prevailed outside, it would induce more highly qualified persons to look for employment in the Service; and those seeking such employment would be more careful to qualify themselves for it. It would follow that the salaries now paid would secure more efficient services, and in that way greater economy as to the number of employes would be possible.

It is not difficult to conceive how a system of examinations might be devised upon which admission to, and promotions in, the Service should be based, and which would have the effect of inspiring a feeling of confidence both inside and outside the Service that merit would be the most reliable road to advancement. But to do this effectually, the system must be so contrived and administered as to ignore all mere political considerations.