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PROPER CUSTOMS' OFFICERS.

A NEW chief clerk must be appointed in the Toronto Customs House to succeed the late Mr. McLean, whose recent demise has removed a most efficient officer from the civil service. This necessity of refilling the office brings up an important question; that is, shall such appointments be given to Government supporters, or shall they be given to the best man for the position, irrespective of his political leanings?

It is unfortunate that some of the best Canadian newspapers have attempted to justify the system of governmental patronage now adopted by both Provincial and Federal Governments. The Globe, which, by its leading position in Ontario, would be expected to be most progressive in the line of civil service and judicial reform, has taken the position that the present practice is generally justifiable. Two or three of the leading papers in Montreal have condemned, as have scores of leading journals throughout the country. The feeling that the present system is based on a wrong principle is growing stronger and stronger, and will continue to grow until something new is adopted.

Especially in Customs appointments, the commercial qualifications of the candidates should be the chief consideration.

Too many of Canada's Customs' officers have been editors, lawyers and political hangers-on before they came to be too lazy to work for their living. A customs' officer should be a business man, of undoubted integrity and broad experience, such as will fit him especially for the position he is to fill.

On this point the following letter to Hon. Clarke Wallace, Comptroller of Customs, from Mr. Stapleton Caldecott, of Caldecott, Burton & Spence, is worthy of perusal:

"MY DEAR SIR,—The lamented death of Mr. McLean, Chief Clerk of the Toronto Custom House, places at your disposal one of the most important offices under your control.

"The late Mr. McLean was a gentleman of the highest character and of great capacity for his onerous position, and the trade of Toronto will greatly miss him. The Board of Trade have special occasion to lament his death, for he placed much valuable information at their disposal, and he was in most active and sympathetic touch with the commercial life of Toronto for the last 24 years.

"Now, since you have been Comptroller of Customs, the merchants have felt the greatest pleasure in approaching you and have the utmost confidence in your administration, because they have always found in you a gentleman well qualified by your commercial experience to understand the various questions which from time to time come up in the administration of your department. In England between the customs authorities and the Chambers of Commerce there exists the most friendly feeling and co-operation. Sir Courtney Boyle, permanent Secretary of the British Board of Trade, recently attended the meeting of the Associated Chambers of Commerce and expressed the wish that the Department of State, of which he was chief officer, should be in constant communication and sympathy with the commercial opinion of the country. This is as it should be, and I feel assured that when you come to fill the important positions vacated by the death of Mr. McLean and the resignation of Mr. Douglas you will be guided in your decision not by political leanings but by the principle which alone should obtain in all appointments for the civil service, viz., of appointing gentlemen best qualified by their previous service, their long experience of commercial matters, and their abilities to fill the post with assured ability. You have in the past worked so efficiently and so pleasantly with the merchants of our city that I venture to respectfully suggest that you will keep the qualifications of any gentleman you may appoint carefully in view, and not permit mere wire-pullers or political hacks to get into such positions as these so long and efficiently held by Messrs. McLean and Douglas. With great respect, I am, yours faithfully,

"STAPLETON CALDECOTT."

TORONTO, Oct 9.

SPECIAL FEATURES.

This issue will be seen to contain some special features. The St. John conference is a notable event, and the report is worth reading. Retailers' views on the shorter terms question is likewise. The First Prize Essay in the recent competition should be preserved. Trade pointers are unusually plentiful, while the volume of news is larger than ever.